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CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH;

*A GERMAN STORY.*

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John Hook  
1793  
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# CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH;

A

GERMAN STORY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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BY MRS. PARSONS,

AUTHOR OF

ERRORS OF EDUCATION, MISS MEREDITH, WOMAN AS  
SHE SHOULD BE, AND INTRIGUES OF A MORNING.

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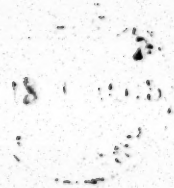
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## CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH,

A GERMAN STORY.

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THE clock from the old castle had just gone eight when the peaceful inhabitants of a neighbouring cottage, on the skirts of the wood, were about to seek that repose which labour had rendered necessary, and minds blest with innocence and tranquillity assured them the enjoyment of. The evening was cold and tempestuous, the rain poured in torrents, and the distant thunders rolled with tremendous noise round the adjacent mountains, whilst the pale lightning added horrors to the scene.



Pierre was already in bed, and Jaqueline preparing to follow, when the trampling of horses was heard, and immediately a loud knocking at the door ; they were both alarmed ; Pierre listened, Jaqueline trembled ; the knocking was repeated with more violence ; the peasant threw on his humble garment, and, advancing to the door, demanded who was there ? “ Two travellers, (answered a gentle voice) overtaken by the storm ; pray, friend, afford us shelter.” “ O ! (cried Jaqueline) perhaps they may be robbers, and we shall be murdered.” “ Pho ! simpleton, (said Pierre) what can they expect to rob us of.” He opened the door, and discovered a man supporting a lady who appeared almost fainting. “ Pray, friend, (said the man) permit this lady to enter your cottage, I fear she has suffered much from the storm.” “ Poor soul, I am sorry for her ; enter and welcome, (cried Pierre.) Jaqueline placed her wooden arm-chair by the chimney, ran for some wood, and kindled a blaze in a moment, whilst Pierre put the horse into a little out-



out-house which held their firing and his working implements, and returned with a portmantua to the lady. They had only some bread and milk to offer, but they made it warm, and prevailed on their guest to take some. The man, who appeared an attendant, did the same. The lady soon got her clothes dry, but she wanted rest, and they had no bed to offer. One single room answered all their purposes of life; their humble bed was on the floor, in a corner of it, but though mean it was whole and clean. Jaqueline entreated the lady to lie down; she refused for some time, but growing faint from exhausted spirits and fatigue, she was compelled to accept the offer; the others sat silently round the fire: but, alas! horror and affliction precluded sleep, and the fair traveller, after laying about two hours, returned again to the fire-side, weary and unrefreshed. "Is there any house near this?" (demanded she.) "No, madam, (replied Jaqueline) there is no house, but there is a fine old castle just by, where there is room enough, for only one old man and his wife live

in it, and, Lord help us, I would not be in their place for all the fine things there.” “Why so?” (said the lady.) “O! dear madam, why it is haunted; there are bloody floors, prison rooms, and scriptions, they say, on the windows, to make a body’s hair stand an end.” “And how far from your cottage is this castle?” “A little step, madam, farther up the wood.” “And do you think we could obtain entrance there?” “O, Lord! yes, madam, and thank you too: why the poor old souls rejoice to see a body call there now and then; I go sometimes in the middle of the day, but I take good care to keep from the fine rooms and never to be out after dark.” “I wish, (said the lady) it was possible to get there.” Pierre instantly offered his service to conduct her as soon as it was light, and notwithstanding some very horrible stories recounted by Jaqueline, she determined to visit this proscribed place.

When the morning came, the inhabitants of the cottage set out for the castle. The lady

lady was so much enfeebled, from fatigue and want of rest, that she was obliged to be placed on the horse, and they found it very difficult to lead him through the thickets. They at length espied a fine old building, with two wings, and a turret on the top, where a large clock stood, a high wall surrounded the house, a pair of great gates gave entrance into a spacious court, surrounded with flowering shrubs, which lay broken and neglected on the ground, intermixed with the weeds which were above a foot high in every part.

Whilst the lady's attendant lifted her from the horse, Pierre repaired to the kitchen door where the old couple lived, which stood in one of the wings, and knocking pretty loudly, the old woman opened it, and, with a look of astonishment, fixed her eyes on the lady and her servant. " Good neighbour, (said Pierre) here is a great gentlewoman cruel ill; she wants food and sleep, we have brought her here, she is not afraid of your ghosts, and so therefore you can give her a

good bed, I suppose." "To be sure I can, (answered Bertha, which was the woman's name :) to be sure I can make a bed fit for the emperor, when the linen is aired : walk in, madam ; you look very weak." Indeed the want of rest the preceding night had so much added to her former feeble state, that it was with difficulty they conveyed her into the kitchen. Bertha warmed a little wine, toasted a bit of bread, and leaving Jaqueline to attend the lady, she made a fire in a handsome bed-room that was in that wing, took some fine linen out of a chest and brought it down to air. "Dear, my lady, (cried she) make yourself easy, I'll take care of you, and if you ar'nt afear'd, you will have rooms for a princess." Pierre and Jaqueline being about to return to their daily labour, found their kindness amply rewarded by the generosity of the stranger, who gave them money enough, they said, to serve them for six months. With a thousand blessings they retired, promising however to call daily on the lady whilst she staid at the castle, though their hearts misgave them



them that they should never see her more, from their apprehensions of the ghosts that inhabited the rooms above stairs. When the apartment was arranged, the lady was assisted by Bertha and laid comfortably to rest; she gave her some money to procure food and necessaries, and desired her servant might have a bed also. This the good woman promised, and, wishing her a good sleep, returned to the kitchen.

“ God bless the poor lady, (said she) why she is as weak as a child ; sure you must have come a great way from home.” “ Yes, (answered Albert, the servant’s name, we have indeed, and my poor lady is worn down by sorrow and fatigue ; I fear she must rest some time before she can pursue her journey.”

“ Well, (said Bertha) she may stay as long as she likes here, no body will disturb her in the day time, I am sure.” “ And what will disturb her at night ?” (asked Albert.) “ O, my good friend, (answered she) no body will sleep in the rooms up stairs ; the gentlefolks



#### CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH.

who were in it last could not rest, such strange noises, and groans, and screams, and such like terrible things are heard; then at t'other end of the house the rooms are never opened; they say bloody work has been carried on there." "How comes it, then, (said Albert) that you and your husband have courage to live here?" "Dear me, (replied she) why the ghosts never come down stairs, and I take care never to go up o' nights; so that if madam stays here I fear she must sleep by day, or else have a ground room, for they never comes down; they were some of your high gentry, I warrant, who never went into kitchens." Albert smiled at the idea, but, resuming his discourse, asked the woman to whom the castle belonged? "To a great Baron, (said she) but I forget his name," "And how long have you lived here?" "Many a long year, friend; we have a small matter allowed us to live upon, a good garden that gives us plenty of vegetables, for my husband, you must know, is a bit of a gardener, and works in it when he is able." "And

“ And where is he now ? ” (said Albert)  
“ Gone to the village six leagues off to get a little meat, bread and wine. ” “ What ! does he walk ? ” “ Lord help him, poor soul, he walk ! no, bless your heart, he rides upon our faithful little ass, and takes care never to overload her, as we don’t want much meat, thank God. But where will you like to sleep ? (added she ; ) will you go up stairs, or shall I bring some bedding in the next room ? ” Albert hesitated, but, ashamed to have less courage than his mistress, asked if there was any room near the lady’s ? “ Aye, sure, (answered Bertha) close to her there is one as good as hers. ” “ Then I will sleep there (said he.) His good hostess now nimbly as she could, besired herself to put his room in order, and was very careful not to disturb the lady. Albert was soon accommodated and retired to rest.

In the evening the lady came down into the kitchen, much refreshed, and expressed her thanks to the good woman for her kindness.

“Heavens bless your sweet face, (cries Bertha) I am glad to my heart you be so well. Ah! as I live, here’s my Joseph and the ass.” She run out into the court to acquaint her good man with what had befallen her in his absence. “As sure as you be alive, Joseph, she is some great lady under trouble, poor soul, for she does sigh so piteously; but she has given me plenty of money to get things for her, so you know it’s nothing to us, if she likes to stay here, so much the better.” “I hope, (said the old man) she is no bad body.” “No, that she an’t, I’ll swear (cries Bertha;) she looks as mild as the flowers in May.” They had now unloaded their faithful ass, and entered the kitchen with their provender. Joseph was confounded at the appearance of the lady; he made his humble bow, but was very silent. Bertha prepared some eggs and fruit for her supper; she eat but little, and that little was to oblige the old couple; she then asked for a candle, and said she would retire to her room. Joseph and Bertha looked at each other with terror, both were silent; at length

length Joseph, with much hesitation of voice and manner, said, " I fear, madam, you will not be quiet there, it will be better, to my thinking, if a fire was made in one of the parlours and the bedding brought down. There is no occasion for fire, (answered the lady) but merely to air the room ; however I am not in any apprehension of sleeping in the room above, at least I will try it this night. It was with great reluctance the honest couple permitted her to retire ; Bertha had not even the courage to accompany her, but Albert and Joseph offering to go, she ventured up to make the bed, and her work finished, flew down like one escaped from great danger.

The men having withdrawn, the lady seated herself at the dressing table, and having opened her portmantua to take out some linen for the ensuing day, she burst into tears on viewing the small quantity of necessaries she possessed ; she cast a retrospection on her past calamities, they made her shudder ; she looked forward to the future, all was dark and

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gloomy ; she wrung her hands, “ What will become of me, unhappy as I am, where can I fly ? who will receive a poor unfortunate, without family or friends ? The little money I have will be soon exhausted, and what is to be the fate of poor Albert, who has left all to follow me ! ” Overcome with sorrow, she wept aloud. When, turning her eyes to the window, she saw a light glide by from the opposite wing, which her room fronted, and which Bertha had informed her was particularly haunted. At first she thought it was imagination ; she arose and placed her candle in the chimney ; curiosity suspended sorrow—she returned and seated herself at the window, and very soon after she saw a faint glimmering light pass a second time ; exceedingly surprised, but not terrified, she continued in her situation : she saw nothing further. She at length determined to go to rest, but with an intention to visit every part of the house the following day. She got into bed, but could not sleep. About twelve o’clock she heard plainly a clanking of chains, which  
was



was followed by two or three heavy groans; she started up and listened, it was presently repeated, and seemed to die away by gentle degrees; soon after she heard a violent noise, like two or three doors clapping to with great force. Though unaccustomed to fear, she could not help trembling. She felt some inclination to call up Joseph, she then recollected Albert was in the next room; she knocked at the wainscot and called Albert! No answer was made. She got out of bed, and throwing on a loose gown, took her candle, and, opening the door of the next apartment, went up to the bed; she saw he was buried under the clothes. "Albert, (said she) do not be afraid, 'tis your mistress with a light; he then ventured to raise himself, and though but little inclined to mirth, she could not refrain from smiling at the fright he was in; the drops of perspiration run down his face, his eyes were starting, and he was incapable of speaking for some time. "Pray, Albert, (said his lady) have you heard any particular noise?" "Noise, (repeated he) O Lord! all the

the ghosts have been here together to frighten me." "Here—where, (asked she) in this room?" "I believe so, (he replied;) in this or the next I am sure they were; there was a score or two in chains, then there was groans and cries: but pray, madam, leave the candle a minute at the door, I will throw on my clothes and get down into the kitchen and never come up stairs again." "Well, but, Albert, (said she) I must stay in my room, have you more cause for fear than I have?" "No, madam, thank God, I never did harm to man, woman or child." "Then take courage, Albert, I will light your candle, and, as I shall be in the next apartment, and will leave my door open, you may either call to me or go down stairs, if you are a second time alarmed." It was with reluctance he obeyed, and repeatedly desired the doors might remain open.

The lady retired to her room, for some time hesitating whether she should dress herself or go into bed, she at length threw herself

self down in her night gown, but could not sleep. Strange and various were her conjectures respecting the lights she had seen, and the unaccountable noises she had heard; she was not surprised that the weak minds of the old people should be terrified, or that Albert, who was likewise far advanced in years, above sixty, should shrink from alarms which had given her a momentary terror; but as she did not suffer her mind to dwell on the causes being supernatural, she conceived there must be some mystery which, on the following day, if her health permitted, she resolved, if possible, to explore. Towards morning she fell into a profound sleep, undisturbed by groans or noises of any sort.

Albert, who, by his terror and apprehensions of seeing those ghosts that had so greatly frightened him, was prevented from sleeping, got up the moment day appeared and crept down stairs, where he was soon after joined by Joseph. "How have you slept, my good friend? (asked he.) "Slept! (replied

plied the other ;) why, who could sleep, d'ye think, when chains were rattling, ghosts roaring and groaning, doors banging with violence enough to shake the foundation of the walls? Lord help me, I would not live in such a place—no, not to be master of the whole estate.” “ Aye, I knew how it would be, (said Joseph ;) it's always the same business when any body comes here to sleep ; we never hear any noise else.” “ Why, then your ghosts are very rude unsociable folks, (answered Albert) for strangers can do them no hurt, and there's room enough, me-thinks, in this great house for them to have their merriments, without coming to frighten honest travellers, that never desire to interrupt them.” “ I don't know how it is, (replied Joseph) but as to merriment, sure there can be none in groans and cries, and they do say that cruel wicked deeds have been done in this castle, and I suppose the poor souls can't lay quiet.” “ Dear me, (cries Albert) I wish my mistress may be well enough to go farther, though, poor soul, she does n't know  
where



where to go to, that's true." " Poor lady, that's bad indeed; has she no parents, nor husband, nor uncles, nor aunts, nor——" " Yes, yes, (said Albert, interrupting him) she has some relations, but what of that, better she had none, I believe, for her—— O, here comes Bertha." On her entrance the good morrows and enquiries were repeated; Bertha expressed her sorrow for the lady, and immediately ascended the stairs to see if she was not frightened out of her wits by such a cruel disturbance.

She soon returned with the lady, and breakfast being quickly set before her, she endeavoured to eat, but her appetite was so indifferent as to cause great pain to the friendly Bertha.

Joseph mounted his favorite beast and repaired to the town, that he might procure necessaries for his family, superior to what he had bought the day before. After his departure, and that Albert was gone to look after his



his horse, the fair stranger demanded of Bertha if she could give her any account of the owners of the castle. “ Why, madam, (answered she) the present lord of this estate is—aye, his name is Count Wolfenbach; he married a very handsome lady at Vienna, and brought her here; it was then a beautiful place, very unlike such as it be now; but howsoever they say he was very jealous, and behaved very ill to the poor lady, and locked her up, and there she was brought to bed, and the child was taken from her, and so she died, and ’twas said the child died, and so every body believes ’tis their ghosts that make such dismal noises in the castle, for soon after my Lord the Count went away, and Joseph, who worked under the gardener, was ordered to take care of the house; and I lived then under the cook, so we married: all the other servants were discharged, and so we have lived here ever since. My Lord came here once or twice, but the ghosts made such a noise he could not stay. Several gentry have slept here at times, but no body would stay a second

cond night, and so we have all to ourselves by day, and the ghosts, or what they be, have got all the rooms by night, and then they be quiet enough." " Pray, (interrogated the lady) can I walk through the rooms and examine the opposite wing?" " To be sure, madam, you can, if you be so bold, but neither I nor Joseph ever goes there, because that's the part where the poor Countess died." " How many years ago was it?" " Near eighteen, my Lady; for next Christmas we have been married so many years, and I was fifty-three and Joseph fifty-two when we came together; not very young, to be sure, what of that, we live very comfortable, only a little lonely or so." " Well, (said her guest) I shall be glad to walk through all the apartments." " I will attend you, madam, except to the other side, there I never goes."

After breakfast was over, the lady and Bertha walked up stairs; they went through several fine apartments, the furniture rich though old fashioned; one hung with family portraits

portraits she was particularly pleased with; two attracted her attention greatly, which Bertha told her, she had heard say, were the present Count and his late lady.

After going through the body of the house they came to the doors that led to the other wing: "Now, for goodness sake, dear madam, don't go no farther, for as sure as you are alive, here the ghosts live, for Joseph says he often sees lights and hears strange things." "My good friend, (replied the lady) you may return, but I certainly will look into those rooms." "O, pray good, your ladyship, don't go now." She persisted however in her determination, and on Bertha's leaving her she opened the door which led to a gallery, and a handsome stair-case, on the right hand she saw a suite of four rooms, all well furnished, two as bed rooms, one handsome sitting room, the other a library, well filled with books, in handsome cases; these two last rooms, she observed, exactly fronted the one on the opposite side, where she had slept.

Having

Having examined those apartments, she saw, on the other side of the gallery, two other doors; these, on trial, she found locked. She then returned and went down the stair-case; after the first landing place the windows were shut, and when she came to the bottom she entered a hall, in which were three doors; one she attempted to open, immediately a murmuring noise was heard, and the instant she opened the door, another at the end of the room was shut to with great violence. The lady for a moment stood suspended; she trembled, and deliberated whether she should return or not; but recovering resolution, she entered; a candle was burning on a table, the windows were closed up, there were books and implements for drawing on the table; this convinced her the inhabitants were alive, however, and going to the door, she said aloud, "Whoever resides in this apartment need not be under any apprehensions from the intrusion of an unfortunate woman, whom distress has driven to this castle, and only a melancholy kind of curiosity has



has induced her to explore a part of it proscribed by every one."

She had scarcely uttered these words when the door opened, and a lady, attended by an elderly woman, appeared. Both started; but the visitor, in a confused manner, apologized for her intrusion. The other taking her hand, placed her in a chair. "Perhaps, madam, (said she) this may prove the happiest day of my life, and I may rejoice that your curiosity and courage is superior to those terrors by which others have been intimidated." "At least, madam, you will do me the justice to believe (answered the lady) that I would not have been guilty of this intrusion, had I known these apartments were really inhabited, but be assured, madam, your secret is perfectly safe with me." "I do not doubt it, (replied the other;) your countenance is a letter of recommendation to every heart." She then ordered her attendant to bring some refreshments, which consisted of biscuits and fruits.

The woman being withdrawn, the lady of the house said, "However, madam, I may rejoice in seeing a female of your appearance, I cannot help lamenting that one so young should know sorrow, or be driven to seek an asylum in such a melancholy place as this castle." "I am indeed, madam, an object of pity, (replied the other) without friends, a home, or one acquaintance to sooth my sorrows. I have fled from oppression and infamy, unknowing where to direct my steps, or what will become of me." "Surely, (said the former lady) heaven directed your steps here, that we might communicate comfort to each other: griefs, when divided become less poignant; I have known years of sorrow, yet I still support life in a feeble hope of one day being restored to happiness." "Alas! (replied the other) not one shadow of hope can I derive from either past or future prospects; and as I have intruded thus upon you, madam, it is but fit you should know who and what I am. I was born, as I have been told, at Fribourg, and lost both my parents in my infancy.

infancy. My birth was noble, but my fortune very trifling. The first thing I can remember was a gentleman who I was taught to call uncle, an elderly woman his housekeeper, and a young girl attendant on me; we lived in the country, about three miles from any town or village. As I grew up masters were hired to attend me, and by their skill and my own attention, having nothing to divert my mind from my studies, I became tolerably accomplished at twelve years of age, when my masters were discharged. We received no company; a few gentlemen called now and then, but those I never saw. My uncle was exceedingly fond of me; his name was Mr. Weimar, mine Matilda Weimar. Our ancestors, he said, had been Counts, and persons of high rank and fortunes, but by war and prodigality, they had been reduced to comparative poverty; therefore it was fortunate for me he had never been married. I think I am naturally affectionate and grateful, yet I never felt any degree of either for my uncle; and, young as I was, have frequently  
taken

taken myself to task when I found a repugnance to return his careffes. I devoted my whole time to my studies ; my uncle, when I was about fifteen, having some property in France, was compelled, by the failure of a house, to go there in person ; at first he talked of taking me with him, but changed his mind, and gave me in charge to his housekeeper and an old servant called Albert, with strict orders I should never go beyond the walks belonging to his castle. Nothing could exceed the tenderness of his behaviour at parting, and for the first time in my life I was affected ; I returned his embraces and shed some tears. “ Ah ! Matilda, (said he) are you indeed sorry I should leave you ? ” “ I am, indeed,” (I replied.) “ Then you shall go with me, (cried he, eagerly ; but striking his forehead, he exclaimed, “ No ! that will not do ; dear Matilda, my sweet niece, keep yourself retired, apply to your studies, I shall soon return, and, I hope, make you the happiest of women.” I felt at that moment real gratitude and affection ; I promised strictly to obey



his commands, and by my endeavours to improve my mind, deserve his love and esteem. He quitted me with extreme reluctance, and for several days I found the want of his company and conversation, but by degrees I grew reconciled, and as Agatha and Albert were respectable and intelligent persons, for their stations in life ; I made them both my friends and companions. This was really the happiest period of my life ; I was capable of amusing myself with music and drawing, in the evenings I walked in the garden and adjoining wood with Agatha, returned with a good appetite, and slept quietly. My uncle remained in France near nine months, he constantly wrote to me, and I was punctual in my answers ; at the end of that period he returned ; I was overjoyed to see him, but the pleasure I felt and expressed fell very short of the rapture and transport with which he embraced and praised me ; he dwelt on the improvement in my person with such delight, that I felt confused and uneasy ; the attention which used to give me pleasure now was painful, and

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I repulsed his caresses involuntarily. He told me he had brought me a present of some books and drawings, both of which he knew would be acceptable to me; I acknowledged his kindness with an apparent gratitude, yet I was in reality but little thankful, though I could not account for the increasing coldness of my behaviour. After a hasty supper I retired to bed, notwithstanding his wishes to detain me, and after I was alone I began to reflect on my conduct, so cold and thankless, towards so kind an uncle, whose affection for me seemed greatly increased. I was displeased with my own reflections, and resolved to behave better to him the following day.

“ The next morning I rose early; my uncle was not up, Agatha met me going into the garden. “ My dear Miss, (said she) you were very shy and unkind to your uncle last night; the good man loves you dearly, and 'tis not your business to be shewing him such slights, I can tell you.” Though conscious I was wrong I was amazed at the freedom of her observations,

servations, as she was not much in the room with us ; I therefore made some trifling answer and pursued my walk.

“ It was plain my uncle had taken notice of my coldness, and complained to her : I was mortified and vexed ; after taking two or three turns I went into the house, and met my uncle in the breakfast room ; I assumed the kindest manner possible in my salutations to him, and I saw he was highly gratified by it. He produced his books and drawings, the latter were very beautiful, but the attitudes and want of decent drapery confused and hurt me, for although I had never received any particular lessons on delicacy or modesty, yet there is that innate virtuous principle within us, that shrinks involuntarily from any thing tending to violate that sense of decency we are all, I believe, born with ; I therefore could not examine them with the accuracy I wished, much less praise them, as I saw he expected. “ Are they not exquisite pieces ? ” (demanded he.) “ They are very fine drawings,

drawings, I believe, Sir, but I think the subjects of them are exceptionable." "My dear girl, (he replied, laughing,) you know nothing of the world; whoever excepts against the subjects of drawings, or the attitudes of statues? 'tis the execution and proportions that attract our notice, and I assure you, my little prude, there is nothing objectionable in any point of view, in those drawings before you, nor in the books, which are now most in repute among the fashionable circles in France."

"Though my reason was not convinced I made no further scruples, but thanked him for his attention to my amusement, and, breakfast over, retired to my own apartment, having my presents carried there, that I might examine them at my leisure.

"From this time my uncle's behaviour was to me unaccountable, he was for ever seeking opportunities to caress me, his language was expressive of the utmost fondness, he praised



my person in such glowing colours as sometimes filled me with confusion. In short, madam, not to tire you, within three months after his return I began to be extremely uneasy at freedoms I scarce knew how to repulse. One morning after dressing I went into the garden, a thing unusual with me at that hour, and going round a serpentine walk, which led to a summer-house, I thought I heard voices there; I stopt at the back of it, which, as well as the front, had a door that opened into the garden, and plainly heard Agatha's voice, saying, "I tell you, Sir, there is no other way, send Albert off for a few days, or turn him off at once, for he loves Miss Matilda as if she were his own child, and therefore we must get rid of him; but you are so long settling your mind—get into her room at night when she's asleep, I'll take care nobody comes there, or tell her roundly at once you are not an uncle to her—I would not longer stand upon ceremony." "Well, Agatha, I'll take your advice, and dispatch Albert to-morrow, and the next night I will be happy." You may

may suppose, madam, I was scarcely able to support myself. Having heard thus far I tottered from the summer house, and got into the shrubbery, where I threw myself on the ground, and preserved myself from fainting by a copious flood of tears.

“Overwhelmed by my own reflections, without a friend or habitation to fly to for protection, uncertain whether this man was really my uncle or not, yet convinced he had the most diabolical designs against me, and that in his house I could not be safe: it is impossible to describe my feelings and distress; at length I arose and recollected what the horrid woman had said of Albert, it was my only resource. I walked from the garden towards the stables; most fortunately I met him coming from them. “Albert, (said I, hastily) I wish to speak with you, follow me into the park.” The man looked surprised—“Me, Miss—I follow you?” “Yes, immediately,” (I replied.) I walked quickly to the park, he came after me; when out of sight of the house

I turned to him — “Albert, do you love me? are you willing to serve me?” “Aye, that I will, dear Miss, to the last drop of my blood.” I then, without losing time, told him the plot designed against me, and what was determined with respect to himself. The good creature was struck dumb with surprise, but recovering himself, “By my soul, (cried he) I will save and serve you whilst I have breath, from such devils. My dear young lady be easy, I have a sister who lives at Lucerne, she will be proud to serve you; ’tis a long journey, but never fear, you can ride behind me, as you have often done in sport: I’ll manage the business to-night, never fear — get up a little early in the morning and meet me here.” We then concerted our whole plan, and I returned to the house with a lighter heart, and got to my apartment unobserved. I was soon after summoned to dinner; when I saw my uncle I turned faint, he flew to me with tenderness — “My dear Matilda, are you ill?” “Only a sick head-ach,” (I replied, disengaging myself from him, and sitting down.)

down.) “ I fear you have been reading too much.” “ Very likely, Sir ; I shall be better by and bye,” was my answer. I could eat but little, yet I tried to do it, and also to rally my spirits to avoid suspicion. When Albert was removing the cloth, “ I have a great favour to ask your Honour.” “ What is it Albert ?” (said my uncle.) “ Why, Sir, I have got a sister married at a village near Lausanne, and the poor soul does so long to see me, that if you could spare me for a week, I should be mightily obliged to you ?” “ For a week ! (replied his master, pleasure dancing in his eyes) you may set off to-morrow and stay a fortnight, it cannot be less time, to give you any comfort with your friends.” The poor fellow bowed his thanks and withdrew.

I now exulted in our prospect of success in my deliverance : I grew more cheerful, my uncle was tender and affectionate ; I bore his caresses without any repulses, but left the room soon as possible. I employed myself in



packing up a few necessaries in a small portmantua, with what little valuables I had, and was tolerably supplied with money, as I thought, knowing little of the expences of a journey. I did not go to bed, and about four in the morning, when the whole house was buried in sleep, I took my portmantua, and with some difficulty carried it down stairs, opened the doors with the greatest precaution, and, to my no small joy, found Albert walking upon the green; he took my load from me, and, without speaking, led the way to the stables, fastened on the portmantua, and getting me behind him, we rode off as fast as possible. Previous to my quitting the room the preceding evening, I desired my uncle not to wait breakfast for me, as I believed I should scarcely rise sooner than ten, as I had not slept well the night before; I therefore thought we should have some hours start of any pursuit, and we proceeded on to Lucerne, the very opposite road from Lausanne, where Albert had asked permission to go to. After a tedious and painful journey we got safe to  
Lucerne

Lucerne. Alas ! how great was our disappointment ; this sister, on whose protection I relied, had been dead three weeks, and her little shop and stock given to a young woman who lived with her, and only a small legacy left to Albert. What now was to be done ? The mistress of the house humanely offered me a bed for a night or two ; vexation and fatigue compelled me to accept the offer : my poor fellow traveller was more affected than myself. We consulted what was next to be done ; he then recollected he had a relation at Zurich, and proposed my going on there. He said it was a good city, and some way or other, doubtless, I might procure a living by my talents. Small as this hope was I had no alternative but to embrace it, and the next morning we pursued our journey ; the day before yesterday was the second day of our travelling from Zurich. The storm came on just before our entrance into the wood, we took shelter for some time, but the trees getting thoroughly wet, and the night setting in, we rode through it, in the hope of

C 6

meeting

meeting some friendly cottage ; we were fortunate to our wishes, and by the inhabitants of that cottage we were conducted to this castle."

She then proceeded to relate the conversation she had heard, relative to its being haunted, with her terror of the preceding night, and determination to explore every apartment in the castle.

" I hope, madam, (added Matilda) the relation I have given, though tedious and little interesting to you, will apologize for my abrupt intrusion here." " Dearest madam, (answered the Lady of the Castle) can you think it possible I should be uninterested for a situation like yours? Young, new to the world, with uncommon attractions, without friends or protectors, surely misfortunes have taken an early hold in your destiny ; but do not despair, my good young lady, Providence never forsakes the virtuous, but in its own good time will relieve us from every difficulty ;

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an assurance of that truth has supported me under the bitterest calamities, and though I am at present dead to the world, I flatter myself I may be of some service to you, but do not think of quitting this castle yet ; happy should I think myself if I could enjoy your society always, but 'tis a selfish wish and shall not be indulged, however our confidence ought to be reciprocal, and you shall know, in part, the peculiar distresses which have driven me to this asylum, though my confidence must be limited from restrictions I dare not break through."

" I fear, madam, (answered Matilda) however eager my curiosity and anxiety may be awakened by your uncommon situation, I must for the present postpone the gratification of it ; my long absence will, I am sure, cause much trouble to my hospitable entertainers, and therefore 'tis time I should return." " Well then, (said the lady) when may I hope to see you again ?" " After dinner, madam, I will attend you." " I shall think every minute an hour till then, (replied the lady)." They parted with mutual regret.



regret. Matilda carefully shut the doors, and returned to Bertha's apartments, with a lighter heart and a dawn of hope.

On her entrance into the kitchen the good creature clasped her hands and shouted for joy ; " O good God be thanked, (said she) that I see you once again ; my dear lady, where have you been and what have you seen ?" " An excellent library of books, (replied Matilda.) " And did you see no ghosts, nor hear no noises ?" " I saw no ghosts, but I certainly did hear noises." " Lord have mercy upon us ! and so, had you courage to stay ?" " Yes, I stayed to view the apartments, but I was a little frightened, I must confess." " O, dear heart, but I hope you won't go again." " Indeed I shall, (said Matilda) I intend to sit there very often, and shall borrow some books to bring home with me." " O, madam, don't be so hardy, who knows what mischief may come of it one day," " I have no fears, good Bertha ; if we perform our duties towards God and  
man,

man, Providence will always preserve us from evil." " Ah! Lord, madam, you talk so good; I am sure I never did hurt to any body, nor Joseph neither, and when no company comes here we be as quiet as lambs, and yet methinks I do wish for folks sometimes, because you know 'tis very lonely—but will you have your bed made below stairs to night?" " No, (replied Matilda) I will sleep in the same room, I have no apprehensions at all now." Bertha wondered at the lady's courage, but said nothing.

Albert had before this requested to sleep below, for as they were ghosts of quality, who never condescended to visit kitchens, he thought himself perfectly safe, on the ground floor.

When dinner was over, Matilda said she should go to the library and fetch some books. Bertha looked quite woe begone, but was silent: not so Albert, who had been informed of the perilous adventure his young mistress had

had undergone in the morning; he besought her, with tears in his eyes, not to trust herself again in the haunted rooms. "If any harm betides you, madam, I shall be a poor miserable fellow for the short remnant of my days." "Be not uneasy, my friend Albert, no ghosts can hurt me; 'tis the living only I fear, not the dead; assure yourself I shall return in perfect safety."

Saying this she went up stairs, leaving Bertha and Albert under great consternation. "Well, the Lord love her, (said the former) she must be a pure good creature to have so much courage—I hope no harm will come on't." "I hope so too, (cried Albert, wiping his eyes.) She is the best sweetest tempered young lady that ever lived;—ah! I little thought to have seen such a day as this for her."

Whilst these two worthy creatures were expatiating upon her praise, Matilda pursued her way to the Lady of the Castle, who was expecting

pecting her with impatience, and warmly embraced her upon her entrance. "How mortifying the reflection, (said the lady, leading her visitant to a chair) that the unexpected happiness I enjoy must be purchased so dearly as by your peace of mind; what delight should I feel in your society, if distress and misfortune had not driven you here!"

"Believe me, madam, (answered Matilda) your presence and conversation has greatly alleviated those sorrows which oppress my heart; and if my company should be productive of pleasure to you, I shall feel much less regret for the causes which compelled me to seek this castle as an asylum for an unhappy orphan, though but a temporary one only."

"Ah! my dear young lady (replied the other) you are but young in the school of affliction; you can look forward with hope, you can feel only for yourself, and, God forbid, you should ever know the sorrows of a wife and mother, who knows not but that she is childless and cut off for ever from those endearing ties." "O, madam, (cried Matilda,

da,



da, interrupting her) forgive me that I have revived such terrible images to your mind; let not my curiosity occasion such painful ideas, at least we will enjoy the present hour with mutual satisfaction, and defer your painful recital 'till another day." "Charming girl, (said the lady) I accept the delay you offer me, and am happy that I can assure you of an asylum whenever you grow tired of this castle. I have a sister in France, married to the Marquis de Melfort, she is one of the best of women; she is no stranger to my situation and has repeatedly wished me to come into the world and reside with her, but I have powerful reasons for refusing, though she is the dearest friend I have on earth, and I am certain will rejoice to offer you an accommodation in her house, and a place in her heart, as she has no children to engage her attention." Matilda made the warmest acknowledgements for this kind offer, but said, unaccustomed as she was to the busy world, she was apprehensive Paris would be the last place she ought to reside in, particularly as her uncle might go there,

there, having property and friends in that city, and she might run the hazard of being discovered.

Whilst she was speaking the lady's attendant entered with a letter, " Joseph has just brought this, my lady." " Joseph ! (repeated Matilda, involuntarily.) " Yes, (said the lady, smiling) your friend Joseph is my friend also ; this letter is from my sister—but bid our old friend step in." Joseph entered, but started back with surprise when he beheld Matilda seated quietly in the room,—“ Good Lord ! (cried he) how came young madam here ?” “ This lady's courage, you see, has penetrated through our secret, and now we have no occasion for any reserve before her, she will as carefully guard it from your wife as you do.” “ Lord ! I am sure (answered Joseph) it goes to my heart to keep any thing from poor Bertha, she is such a good creature, but women's tongues will blab sometimes, to be sure, and as I have sworn to your ladyship, God forbid I should break my oath, though  
often

often and often I have longed to tell my wife."

"However, Joseph (said the lady, gravely) I depend upon your honesty and oath."

"You have nothing to fear, my lady, eighteen years practice has learnt me to hold my tongue; have you any further commands?"

The lady replying in the negative, he made his bow and retired.

"That man is a faithful good creature, I owe my life to him; I know nothing of his wife, though I am told she is a worthy woman; but as a secret should never, if possible, be trusted to chance or accident, I made him swear not to reveal mine, without permission from me." Matilda expressed her satisfaction that the lady had such a faithful servant, and taking a book from the table, requested she would open her letter.

This being complied with, she presently exclaimed, "Alas! my brother and sister are going within a month to England, perhaps to stay some time; yet why should I  
grieve

grieve at that, they cannot come to me." Then reading on, she again cried out, "My dear Miss Weimer, if you will accept of my sister's protection, it is now at your service: hear what she says, after expressing her regret that I cannot be of her party, "I wish I could meet with some amiable female companion, to take the tour of England with me, there are so few of one's acquaintance that are desirable as intimate friends, that nothing can be more difficult than to obtain such a one as I am anxious to have: young ones we cannot meet with, and I cannot bear the idea of being plagued with the ridiculous fopperies of an old coquet; for I am not yet so much of a French woman as to think there is no difference in ages, and that a fine dressed and high coloured lady, though near to her grand climacteric, shall be indulged in all the expectations of youth and beauty."

"Now, my dear Miss, you are exactly the lady that will suit my sister; it is not proper, at your age, that you should be buried here, other .



otherwise it would be the greatest felicity in the world for me to enjoy your conversation."

"I certainly, madam, (answered Matilda) should think myself most fortunate in attending the Marchioness, but indeed my finances are so slender, and the necessaries I have are so trifling that I am unable to take a journey of consequence. When I left my uncle's house I was so entirely ignorant of travelling expences, that I conceived I had plenty of money to last a considerable time, but I find myself much mistaken; my little stock is considerably diminished, and I must try, by my industry, soon to support poor Albert as well as myself." "I am happy, (returned the lady) that I can obviate some of your objections. I have a large store of linen I never can wear in this place; I have a good deal of money by me, for I do not spend half the income allowed me; you must—you shall do me the favour to accept my little assistance, as from a mother to her child, I will not be denied." "Your goodness, madam, (said Matilda) overpowers me, but, alas! poor

Albert, I cannot forsake him." "Nor shall you, my dear young lady; a faithful servant like him is an acquisition to any family: my sister, I am persuaded, will rejoice to receive him; tell me, therefore, you accept of my proposal, and I will write instantly: we shall then know when it will be absolutely necessary you should join her, that I may not be too soon deprived of the pleasure I now enjoy. I shall leave it to yourself to acquaint her, or not, as you please, with your story, 'tis sufficient I recommend you as a friend of mine." Matilda could form no objection to this kind offer in her desperate circumstances; and whilst she amused herself with a book, the lady wrote her letter, and having read it previous to its delivery to Joseph, her young friend expressed her warmest acknowledgments for the favourable manner in which she was mentioned in it. This business settled, the lady took her into the next apartment, the windows of which were also closed. "This room (said she) opens into the garden, where I walk occasionally of an evening,  
when

when not liable to observation. In these drawers, my dear Miss, there are plenty of necessaries, all at your service; to-morrow we will examine them." "I cannot find language, madam, to express my gratitude." "Do not attempt it, be assured your acceptance of my little assistance is a sufficient return for what you consider as an obligation. But pray tell me how you came to venture visiting these apartments, which are generally believed to be haunted?" "As I never had my mind occupied by any ideas of ghosts, (answered Matilda) and could not conceive any actions of my life had subjected me to the terror of supernatural visitations, I believed there must be some other cause for the appearance of lights which I traced in the windows above, and for the noise I heard in the night, though I confess the latter did terrify me; I resolved therefore to visit these rooms, although I was told in one of them there was blood on the floor and horrid inscriptions on the windows." "Your information was true, (answered the lady, with a sigh she could

could not suppress) it is the room above which answers the description you have heard; another day, when I have related my melancholy story, you shall see it. I am much pleased with your courage, which proceeded from a right principle: when the mind is conscious of no evil actions, nor any deviations from rectitude, there is no cause for fear or apprehensions in a thinking sensible person, and I hope, my dear Miss Weimar, you will never want resolution on similar occasions; judge always for yourself, and never be guided by the opinions of weak minds."

"You are very good, madam, (replied Matilda) in favouring me with your approbation; I shall think myself particularly fortunate if you will condescend to instruct me, for it is with shame I confess, more attention has been paid to external accomplishments than to the cultivation of my mind, or any information respecting those principles of virtue a young woman ought early to be acquainted with."

"You are truly good and amiable, (said the lady;) born with sentiments of virtue, and



natural understanding pointed out the right path to happiness, pursue it through life, ever remember it is better to suffer from the follies or vices of others than to feel self-condemnation from a sense of your own: the one, time and patience may subdue, or at least blunt the sharp edge that wounds you; but, for the other there is no consolation, self-reproach admits no healing balm, that can enable us to stem the torrent of oppression, or the evils which arise from our own misconduct. You will pardon the freedom you have invited, my good young lady; when you know my story, you will find I am qualified to speak on the subject from very painful lessons, which I pray heaven you may ever be a stranger to." She now took her hand and led her to the other room, where refreshments and pleasing conversation made the two hours Matilda passed there the most pleasing she had ever known. When she took leave they parted with regret, and proposed meeting at an early hour the following day; when the lady promised to relate the events that had compelled her to a seclusion

seclusion from the world, and the motives which induced her to alarm every stranger that came to the Castle.

Matilda stepped into the library, and selecting two or three books, returned to her friendly hostess, whose surprise and pleasure seemed equally gratified by seeing her in safety. Joseph came in soon after; he looked with increased respect and kindness, but was entirely silent as to their meeting in the lady's apartment.

When the hour of retiring came, Matilda repaired to her room with great cheerfulness, and when Albert, with tears, entreated her to sleep below, she replied, "You may, my good Albert, if you chuse; but I shall sleep perfectly quiet above stairs; be under no apprehensions for me (added she, smiling) I am no longer a stranger, and have not the smallest apprehensions of being molested this night." She took up her candle and left them.

D 2

"Well,

“ Well, (cried Bertha) the Lord be good unto her, for sure she is the best and most courageous lady I ever saw in my life ; I believe it would kill me if any harm was to happen to such a sweet creature.”

All now retired to rest, and Albert thought himself quite safe on the ground floor from the quality ghosts.

In the morning they met with great satisfaction ; every one eagerly demanded of Matilda if she had slept undisturbed ; she assured them she had, and was greatly refreshed. This account pleased them all. Albert went out to assist Joseph in the garden ; and his mistress was preparing to visit her friend, when Jaqueline made her appearance from the kitchen with Bertha. Matilda was extremely glad to see the good woman, enquired after Pierre, and thanked her for the good accommodations she had procured for her in the Castle. “ Dear me, (said Jaqueline)

line) you cannot think how glad I am to see you, my lady ; I was a-coming yesterday, but I was busy washing, and, Lord help me, this morning before day I was a-frightened out of my wits, for I heard some horses galloping by the door, and I thought I heard this lady screaming most piteously ; so, says I, dear heart, Pierre, I am afraid some mischief has happened to young madam, so I'll be sure to go to the Castle when I have hung out my clothes ; so Pierre he went to fell wood, and I made all haste here, and glad to my heart I am to see you all safe."

Matilda thanked the friendly woman for her attention, and after a little chat left the two gossips together, and hastened to the lady, telling them she was going to sit in the library. She crossed the apartment and descended the stairs, saw the lady's room open, and walked in ; no one was there, but a great appearance of disorder in the room, one of the stools thrown down, a candle on the floor, another burning on the table, and several

D 3

things



things scattered about : she was surprised—she knocked, she called, she had no answer. Terrified beyond expression, she ventured into the other room, where the bed was ; it was empty, but had the appearance of being laid on ; a little cabinet, which stood on the drawers, was open and emptied of its contents. She returned ; she went through the several rooms that were open, all were desolate ; she once more went back to the ground floor. The candle was nearly extinguished, she took up and lighted the other, and, on looking round, she saw the door that opened from the bed room into the garden was ajar, and on trial it opened ; she then readily conceived the lady must have been carried away through the garden, but by whom it was impossible to guess ; robbers would never have incommoded themselves with females. She came in and was about to shut the garden door, when she thought the sound of footsteps reached her ears—she trembled and stopt, presently a door, the opposite side of the bed, opened, and Joseph appeared : she was overjoyed—

joyed—he looked surprised; “O, Joseph, (cried she) what is become of your lady?” Astonished at the question, the poor fellow repeated her words, and added, “Good Lord, madam, has not your ladyship seen her?” “No, (replied she;) I have searched every room in vain, and found this garden door open.” “O, she is carried off then (cried he) and we are all undone—O, my dear, dear lady, you are betrayed at last.” Tears burst from his aged eyes; Matilda sunk into a chair, overcome with sorrow, “But, (said she, when able to speak) how could any one enter, there is no door forced?” “Yes, madam, there is, (answered Joseph) I found the kitchen door burst off its hinges, and came in trembling for fear of what had happened.” “From whence could any one come into the kitchen?” “Why, madam, there is a private passage underground, from the garden to the under apartments, which is unknown to every body, as I thought, but to the lady and myself; but it must be discovered by somebody, and we are all undone.

Hasten, madam, out of this place, I will fasten up the doors and follow you.” “ Joseph (said Matilda) can you meet me in the garden by and bye, I wish to speak with you.” “ Directly after dinner, madam, I will wait upon your ladyship; I will look about a little, I think no one will come here in the open day.” Matilda retired, with trembling limbs and a beating heart, to her own apartment; here she ruminated on what had happened to her friend so recently gained, and so irrecoverably lost—“ Alas! poor lady (said she) who knows what evils she may have to encounter with; a stranger as I am to her story, I have no clue to guide me who may have carried her off, or by whom the cruel action was committed; doubtless it must have been her cries that alarmed Jacqueline—What will become of me? How are all my flattering prospects vanished?” With these bitter reflections she passed the hours ’till dinner time came; she then went down, but with a countenance so altered, that Bertha started back and cried out, “ O, for  
a cer-

a certain young madam has seen something and been frightened!" Albert looked with anxious curiosity, "Be not uneasy, my good friends, (said she;) I assure you neither ghosts nor noises have terrified me, but I am not very well; after dinner perhaps I may be better." "Heaven send it" (cried Bertha.) Albert joined in the wish; and Matilda, affected by their kindness, went into the parlour, where her dinner was served up, not in state or profusion indeed, but good wild fowls, eggs, fallads, and fruit. She waited impatiently until she thought Joseph had nearly dined, and then walked towards the garden; in a little time Joseph joined her, and walking before, conducted her to a distant part of it, where a small arbour in a shrubbery appeared almost choaked with weeds; he led her into it, she sat down—"Now, Joseph, for heaven's sake, tell me every thing about the dear lady." "That I cannot do, (replied Joseph, shaking his head;) my oath will not permit me; but underneath this stone (said he, stamping his foot) is an underground



passage, one end of which goes to that part of the castle, and opens into a private place behind the kitchen; the other end goes through to the end of the wood, I believe, for I never had courage to go so far on, but this morning, when I went down the passage, and came round, I found both doors forced off their hinges below, and was much afraid to come up, where I found you, madam : who it is that has been so wicked, I can only guess, and Lord have mercy on the poor lady, I fear no good will come to her." " But how come the garden door open ; could they convey her through that into the road ?" " Yes, (replied Joseph) that was the way, for after you went up stairs I went into the garden, and the great gate, at the end, was unbolted just at the end of the wood, and I do suppose they had horses waiting there, or a carriage. The few jewels my poor lady had is taken from her little chest, but there are no locks broke on the drawers, and her pockets are left behind, on a stool, with every thing in them ; 'twas no robbers, my lady, I fear." " I fear so

too.

too, (answered Matilda, with a deep sigh;) I dread that she is fallen into worse hands—”

“ Into worse than I fear has got her, (said Joseph) she cannot be fallen—Lord how I rejoiced she had got your ladyship with her.”

“ Aye, Joseph (resumed Matilda) I grieve for her and feel my own loss;—Do you know her sister the Marchioness?” “ I saw her

once after my lady was married; they say she is very happy—God help us, ’twas n’t so here.” “ Your lady has wrote to the Mar-

chioness relative to me; did not you take a letter yesterday?” “ Yes, my lady, and if

there be any answer to it I shall be sure to have it, and you may open it, you know, because the good lady never wrote to any one

else.” Poor Matilda knew not what to do; she was desirous of staying ’till this answer arrived. She was anxious to explore those

apartments that were locked, and after some hesitation asked Joseph if he would meet her there, to-morrow morning. “ Aye, sure,

that I will (returned he) and as I left the lamps burning in the passage, if you like, I

will go down this way with you now." "No, (said she) not now; I will meet you to-morrow in the library, and we may return this way, for I own I should like to see it, though 'tis plain the passage must be known."

They now separated, and Matilda found no possibility of gratifying her curiosity, Joseph's oath being against her, and she too much respected her friend to urge a violation of it on any grounds.

She returned to her apartment and amused herself for a short time with a book; but the agitation of her mind would not admit of entertainment; she threw it aside and called for Albert; he instantly attended her. "My good friend, (said she) I propose remaining here a week or ten days, perhaps not so long, to refresh myself; how far are we from Zurich?" "About a day and a half's journey, not much more." "Well then, Albert, we will wait a few days until I am more in health, unless you are very anxious to get

get there." "Me, my dear young lady, Lord bless you, I want to go only on your account, its all one to me where I am, if you are safe." Matilda was pleased at his answer and expressed her gratitude for his kindness in such terms as brought tears into his eyes. "God bless you, madam, I'll go with you all the world over." He bowed and retired. "Good creature! (exclaimed Matilda) heaven has blessed you with an honest feeling heart; how much superior are thy sentiments to those of better understanding and cultivated talents, when their minds are depraved by the indulgence of irregular passions!"

She sought to compose her spirits, and wait with patience for the expected letter, which she thought must determine her future destiny. She had recommended to Albert not to stir from the house, lest he might be seen by any one that knew him in passing the road, which caution she observed herself.

The



The following morning after breakfast she repaired to the library; ah! thought she, what transport, if I should find the dear lady returned! but no such happiness awaited her; she entered the apartments with a beating heart, and remained near ten minutes in the library before Joseph made his appearance. "Well, Joseph, (said she, hastily, on his entering the room) how are things below stairs?" "All the same as they were yesterday, madam; the doors were fast, and every thing as I left them." "I have a very great desire, (said she) to see that room where the inscriptions are, and which I find is locked up, can you open it?" "Yes, I can; the key is below, but if I may speak my mind, I think you had better not go." "Why so, (demanded she.)" "Why, because, to my thinking, its a dismal place, and will put me in mind of sad doings." "You make me more curious—pray indulge me, Joseph?" "Well, madam, I'll go with you, but 'tis fore against my mind." He went down, and soon returned with two keys, but with evident reluctance

reluctance in his countenance; "I believe one of these is the key (said he;) there used to hang three upon the peg, the other is gone, or left in the closet door perhaps yet: I don't think my lady ever came up to open these rooms." Whilst he was talking he was trying the keys; neither of them would open the first door, the second he unlocked presently; they entered; it was a dressing room, handsomely furnished; they tried the door which opened into the other room, it was fastened on the inside. "This is very strange, (said Joseph;) I will go down again and see if I can find the other key, if you are not afraid to stay alone." "Not in the least," (said Matilda, who was examining the room very carefully.) The windows were very high and grated with bars of iron, the hangings were dark green damask, every thing was handsome, yet the grated windows made it appear gloomy.

Joseph now returned with a countenance of horror and dismay—"O, my lady, I can find no  
key,

key, but looking about the kitchen, behind the door I found a large knife, all over blood."

"Gracious heaven! (cried Matilda) what is it you tell me; I tremble with apprehension; let us force that door, at all events."

"I intend it, (answered Joseph) and have brought a bar with me for the purpose."

The door in the dressing-room being the slightest, after a good deal of labour, the old man burst it open. What a scene presented itself! a woman on the bed weltring in blood! Both uttered a cry of horror, and ran to the bed; it was the elderly attendant of the lady dead, by a wound in her throat.

The sight was too much for poor Matilda, she sunk fainting into a chair: Joseph was frightened out of his wits; he flew down as fast as possible, and returned with water, he bathed her face and hands, and she revived.

"O, Joseph! (cried she) the lady—the dear lady! what is become of her in such bloody

bloody hands?" "The Lord only knows, (answered he, looking with terror towards the closet.) Directed by his eye, Matilda arose and walked to the door; the key was in it; she unlocked it, and was about to enter, when casting her eyes on the floor, she saw it was all over stained with blood, dried into the floor—she started, and involuntarily retreated, but Joseph, who had looked round, said, "You may enter, madam, nothing is here." With trembling steps she entered the closet, her heart beating with terror; it was a large light closet, with a very high window, grated like the other, hung with dark green stuff; two stools covered with the same, and a large wardrobe in it. On the floor was plainly mark'd the shape of a hand and fingers traced in blood, which seemed to have flowed in great quantities. "Good heavens! (cried she) some person was doubtless murdered here too." "Intended to have been murdered, (answered Joseph, wiping his eyes) "but thank God she escaped then." He said no more. Matilda, extremely terrified, hastened out



out of the closet, when the poor creature on the bed met her eyes, "O, Joseph! (exclaimed she, turning with horror from the scene) what is to be done with this unfortunate woman?" "Dear, my lady, I can't tell; I have neither strength to dig a grave, nor can I carry her down." "It is plain, (said Matilda) the wretches who have carried off the lady, murdered the servant to prevent discovery." "I fear, (cried Joseph) my turn will be next—my mouth will be stopt from the same fear." "God forbid, (said Matilda;) but as I have now no hopes of finding the lady, and it will be dangerous to entrust another person with the secret, I think, Joseph, if we can find a small trunk or chest, to fill it with the linen and necessaries your lady offered me, and convey it to one of the rooms in the other wing; I will write a line and leave on the table: yet, on second thought, it will be useless, should she escape, she can never think of coming here again: we will therefore lock and bolt up every door; you can take the keys of the places below

low to your own kitchen, and now and then come through the passage to see if all is safe." Poor Joseph, with a heavy heart, agreed to this.

They had now stayed some time, and thought it best to separate and meet again after dinner : they gladly left these horrid rooms, and returned by different ways to their own habitation.

When Matilda came to her apartment, the terror of her mind was unspeakable ; all she had seen, all she had heard crowded upon her remembrance, and gave her the most horrible ideas. She could not think Joseph's fears unreasonable : if he was supposed to be in the secret, his life was not safe, and in his fate the whole family might be involved : " What can I—what ought I to do ? (cried she, shedding a torrent of tears) no friend to advise me, no certainty of a place to receive me, if I go from hence, and a probability, that, if I stay, I may be murdered ;—what a dreadful alternative

native is mine !” After giving free vent to her tears, she endeavoured to compose her mind, by addressing the Almighty Power to protect her.

Sweet are the consolations which religion affords ! In all our difficulties and distresses, when supplicating the Supreme Being with fervor and a perfect reliance on his goodness, we feel a resignation and confidence, that enable us to support present evils, and look forward with hope to happier days. Such were the feelings of Matilda : she rose from her knees with serenity ; she recovered resolution and firmness ; “ I will not despair, (said she) the Almighty will preserve a friendless orphan, unconscious of guilt, that relies on his protection.” She dried up her tears, and met the family as usual.

When dinner was over, she returned to the library ; Joseph soon joined her ; they went down to the deserted parlour, Matilda could not help shuddering : Joseph found a trunk,  
the

the drawers were opened, and she took out such necessaries of every kind as she thought she must want, yet left plenty behind. In one drawer she found a purse, with a good deal of money in it; here she hesitated; the lady had told her she would supply her, yet she knew not to what amount: Joseph persuaded her to take the whole, "Be assured, madam, my dear lady will never return, cried he. After much hesitation and reluctance, she at length divided it, and then taking a pen and ink, she took an inventory of the clothes and money, with an acknowledgement to repay it when able, and locked it in the drawer with the purse.

Having packed up those few things she had selected, and requested Joseph would take it, by and bye, to a room near hers, she said, "I cannot be easy under the idea, that the poor woman above should lie there to decay; is there no way to place her in a decent manner?" After some pause Joseph said, "there is a large chest in the back-kitchen,



kitchen, with old trumpery in it, if I take them out, perhaps we might get the body there, but I fear I have not strength to bring it down." " Let us see the chest first, (replied Matilda) and then we will consider of the other." She followed him into the back-kitchen, saw the chest, and its contents were soon tumbled into one corner. " Now, Joseph (said she) I will assist you to bring the body down." " You, my lady !" (cried he, staring at her.) " Yes, (rejoined she ;) let us go up." She led the way and he followed ; having unlocked and entered the room she could not help shuddering ; yet took more observation of the gloomy apartment than she had been enabled to do in the morning ; and recollecting what she had heard about inscriptions ; she got upon a chair, and from thence to a kind of window seat very high from the ground : standing on this she examined the window ; it looked out towards a sort of battlement, which surrounded the back part of the castle, the north wind blew full upon it, the only prospects were the  
walls

walls and distant mountains. On the window she saw several lines apparently cut with a diamond ; in one place she read,

- “ I am dumb, as solemn sorrow ought to be ;  
 “ Could my griefs speak, my tale I'd tell to thee.”

In another place these lines were written ;

- “ A wife, a mother—sweet endearing ties !  
 “ Torn from my arms, and heedless of my cries ;  
 “ Here I am doomed to waste my wretched life,  
 “ No more a mother—a discarded wife.”

And again, in another place,

- “ Would you be happy, fly this hated room,  
 “ For here the lost Victoria meets her doom.  
 “ O sweet oblivion calm my tortur'd mind,  
 “ To grief, to sorrow, to despair consigned.

- “ Let gentle sleep my heavy eye-lids close,  
 “ Or friendly death, the cure for all our woes,  
 “ By one kind stroke, give lasting sure repose.”

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Several

Several other lines, expressive of misery, though not of poetical talents, were written in different places, that proved the unhappy writer sought to amuse her painful ideas by her melancholy employment.

Poor Matilda, concluded the wretched victim to some merciless man was sacrificed in that closet where the hand was deeply imprinted in blood on the floor; she viewed it with horror, and getting down from the window; as Joseph had wrapt the body in the counterpane which lay on one side; he tried to lift it, and found the weight less than he expected, "I can carry it myself, my lady," and crept out of the room with it. Matilda, shutting the door hastily, followed him. They deposited the unfortunate woman in the chest, which was fastened down, and without speaking a single word returned to the parlour: here Matilda burst into tears, her resolution and spirits began to fail; the scenes she had witnessed, added to her own distresses, were indeed sufficient to wound and terrify

terrify a stouter heart than this young creature's; little acquainted with the calamities of life, she had flown from approaching danger, without the least idea of the miseries she might encounter in her journey! Joseph sympathized in her sorrow, and waited without speaking 'till she grew more composed; "Come, dear lady, let us leave this sorrowful place; I will take some oil and trim the lamps, for I shall come here every day, though, God knows, with very little hope of ever seeing my dear mistress again." Matilda, oppressed and languid, rose from her chair; he followed her with the box to the apartment next her's, and having deposited it, returned to lock up the doors and trim the lamps in the passage, assuring her he would call daily at the post to seek for letters, as all came directed to him.

She threw herself on the bed after his departure, and gave her mind up to the most melancholy reflections; "Good heavens! (cried she) what scenes of murder and atroci-



ous crimes must have been perpetrated in this castle ; how great is my curiosity to know more of the unhappy Victoria so recently the cause of joy and sorrow, and her unfortunate attendant, but their fate is enveloped in mystery and horror, what mine may be, heaven only knows."

When it grew near dark she went up stairs, but so altered by the agitations of her mind, that Bertha started and exclaimed, " Dear, my lady, are you ill." " I am not very well, (replied Matilda;) I shall take an early supper, and retire to bed." The poor women, with great nimbleness prepared her supper, of which her guest eat but sparingly, and after sending for Albert, who appeared very sorrowful for her indisposition ; she comforted him by an assurance of its being very trifling, and that she should be better after a night's rest ; which was indeed verified ; for having commended herself to the protection of the Father to the fatherless, she dropped into a  
soft

soft slumber, and arose the following morning quite refreshed and composed.

For several days nothing particular occurred; her friends at the cottage called often to see her; Joseph visited the deserted apartments every day, all remained quiet; the uncertainty of the lady's fate gave them great disquietude, but there was no hope of obtaining any information of an event which seemed buried in obscurity.

One day when Joseph returned from town, he whispered the lady to go into the garden; she walked thither it directly, he soon followed, and delivered to her the expected letter from the Marchioness; she made no scruple of opening it. After lamenting the unhappy situation of her sister, and expressing her wishes that she would quit her gloomy abode, she thanks her most cordially for her recommendation of the young lady, whose company will be highly acceptable to her, and assures her sister she will endeavour, by every

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kindness and attention in her power, to make the young lady's situation agreeable, and shall esteem her acceptance of their protection as a very particular favor. She admires her resolution in visiting the apartments in the castle, and is only sorry her sister cannot participate in the pleasures of society. She concludes with requesting the young lady may join them at Paris, soon as possible, within a fortnight ; and assure herself that her old and faithful servant will be received and retained in the family with kindness and ease to himself.

This letter, so gratifying to the wishes of Matilda, was read with transport ; she determined to set forwards on her journey within two or three days. Joseph undertook to procure her a carriage from the next town, and she intended leaving the horse for his use, and take Albert in the chaise with her. The next consideration was in what manner to account to the latter for her sudden intention of going to Paris, and his reception in the family of the Marquis : after some deliberation, she

she returned to the kitchen, and calling Albert aside, told him, by the most fortunate and unexpected intelligence she had heard of an asylum for herself and him, at Paris, in the house of a worthy family, where she hoped they should both meet rest and happiness; and that it was her design to proceed on her journey the third day from that. Albert stared with wonder, but never interrupted her 'till she stopt speaking, then, in a hesitating manner, "Paris is a long journey—I have no friends there; are you sure, madam?"

"Yes, Albert, (said she) I am very sure we shall find friends there to receive us; I cannot explain every thing to you now, some time hence perhaps you shall be informed of every thing." "God bless you, my dear young lady! (cried he) if you are satisfied I am sure I ought to be so, and will go with you when and wherever you please." She was affected by his love and confidence; she assured him, she never should forget the obligations she owed to him, and that his ease and tranquillity would ever be her first care. The



old man hurried from her with tears in his eyes. Bertha was next informed of her intended departure, and was truly sorry, because, as she said, 'twas comfortable to have some kind body in that lonely place, and because the lady having plenty of money, they had very good living now, which, to say truth, she was sorry to lose.

The day previous to her departure she sent for Pierre and Jaqueline: the honest couple were vexed to hear she was about to leave them. She gave them some money, and assured both families, whenever she had it in her power, she would remember their kindness, and reward it in a more ample manner than she now could do. They bestowed a thousand blessings on her, and declared she had made them rich for life.

After they had left her Joseph acquainted Bertha, that a chaise would be there early the next morning, and desired she might have breakfast ready for the lady.

Matilda

Matilda had but little rest; her journey, the circumstance of such an awkward situation, as a self-introduction amongst entire strangers, to one so little accustomed to company as she was, gave her much pain; yet on the other hand, she ought to consider that in her unfriended, unprotected state, an asylum, such as was now offered to her, must be desirable and advantageous; and that as in this life we seldom meet with pleasure or happiness, without some alloy, she ought to be thankful for the good, and submit to temporary inconveniences without murmuring. She arose early; her heart was depressed when she reflected on the uncertain fate of the lady to whose kindness she was indebted for her present hopes and expectations: "Ah! (cried she) heaven bless you, dearest lady, wherever you are, and may Providence one day restore you to felicity and your friends." She quitted the apartment with a flood of tears, and, coming, found the breakfast ready, and soon after a chaise at the gate; Joseph conveyed her portmantua and box to the car-

riage ; Albert stared a little at the latter, but said nothing.

She shook hands with the worthy couple, tears running down their cheeks at parting with so gentle a lady, she having liberally rewarded their kindness, and previously concerted a correspondence with Joseph, if any thing new occurred at the castle, and receiving advice from him how to manage at the post-houses about carriages and horses.

A few days after her departure, Joseph went to the neighbouring town, to procure a few necessaries, and, proud of his present, went upon the horse, instead of his old friend the ass. Whilst he was there, a gentleman came up to him, and, viewing the beast very attentively, asked him if the horse was his. Joseph answered in the affirmative. " Will you sell it ?" (demanded he.) " No, Sir, (replied the other) I cannot sell it." " How long have you had it ?" " Some time, (said Joseph, roughly, and rode off, not liking the stranger's

stranger's curiosity.) He was however followed at a distance, and had scarcely put the horse into the stable, and entered the kitchen, before a knocking at the door was heard, and Joseph saw the same gentleman who was so inquisitive, with another, who had the appearance of a servant, enter the room. "Do not be alarmed, (said the stranger) I want to ask you a few questions, which, if you answer truly, no harm shall happen to you, else you must look to the consequence; tell me from whom you had the horse I saw you ride, and how long it has been in your possession? At your peril answer me with truth." Before Joseph could recollect himself to answer this demand Bertha fell on her knees, "O, Sir, do not hurt my poor husband, and I will tell you all." "Be quiet, wife, (said Joseph) I will answer for myself. I had the horse from a man, a friend of mine." "What was his name?" "Sir, I humbly think that is no concern of your's." "Villain! (cried the gentleman) tell me this instant, or I will send you and your wife to prison, for the horse was



stolen from me. ”“ O, the Lord be gracious unto us, (exclaimed Bertha) [the man’s name was Albert, Sir; we are innocent, indeed we are.” “ I believe it, (said the other, very mildly ;) you look like an honest woman, and I will reward you handsomely, if you speak truth. William, take care of the man, I will go into another room with this good-woman.” “ Bertha!” (cried Joseph, the stranger led her away into the parlour, she crying and begging no harm might happen to Joseph.) He quieted her fears on that head, and then asked if Albert was in the house. “ No, indeed, Sir, (answered she ;) he went away four days ago, in a chaise with the young lady.” “ Ah! (cried he) that is the very thing I wished to know ; and where are they gone, my friend ?” “ Alack, Sir, I believe they be gone to *Paris*, or some place like that.” “ The devil! (exclaimed he) to Paris. Well, and are they to return here ?” “ O, no, Sir, (returned Bertha ;) no such good luck to us, for to be sure she was as generous as an empress.”

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He then returned to the kitchen, where Joseph sat very fullen; "I tell you what, friend, I believe you may be innocent; but the lady you have had here is my niece, who has eloped from my care, and seduced my servant to steal the horse you rode to day, and go off with her; I am now in search of her, and if I can find her, and she will return, I shall receive her with kindness and joy, and forgive every thing; therefore, if you can tell me where she is, you will do her a great piece of service, I assure you; some wicked person has persuaded her to run away." "Sir, (said Joseph, firmly) I heard the lady say she was going to travel,—it was not my business to be impertinent and ask questions." "But you know where she is." "I do not, Sir, (answered he) I cannot tell where she is, nor the places she is going to travel through." "You know she is gone to Paris?" "Yes, Sir; but I heard her say she should not stay there, but travel further; and this is all I know. As to the horse, if you can prove it yours, give me a receipt, and you may take

it." "No, my friend, (replied the gentleman) keep it for your use, but if you should ever hear from, or see Albert or the lady, and will let me know, I will give you a hundred crowns." "O, the goodness (cried Bertha) blest your honour, you shall surely know." "What say you," (said he, turning to Joseph. "I say, Sir, money would not tempt me to do a wrong thing, but as you say it will be for the young lady's advantage, to do her service I will obey you."

The gentleman appeared satisfied, and writing his address, whilst he desired Joseph to get a little wine and water for him, he whispered Bertha, "Get every thing you can out of your husband, and I will make your fortune; my man shall call again to-morrow."

Having drank his wine, he took a civil leave, and, giving Bertha two crowns, rode off.

"Lord !

“ Lord ! (cried she, when he was gone) what luck attends us ! what a kind gentleman ; how sorry I am he didn’t come before the poor lady went away.” “ So am not I (answered Joseph ; ) I don’t like him at all ; he has a smooth speech to be sure, but if he was good, neither madam nor Albert would have run away I dare say : however I shan’t ride the horse any more, ’till I know to whom he does belong.” Bertha tried every way to find if he knew where the lady was gone, but he evaded all her questions, and though he loved his old woman dearly, yet he knew she could not be entrusted with a secret ; not that she would discover from ill-nature, but from a garrulity natural to old age, and a desire of obliging any one who wanted information from her.

Joseph, in the early part of his life, had obtained a tolerable education, and had better expectations, but the wars had carried off his friends and little possessions ; he was glad therefore, in a humble state, to earn his bread, and



be contented with the situation Providence had ordained for him; but his sentiments were above his condition, and he prized his word, and kept it when pledged with much more exactness than a fine gentleman does his honour, when given to a favourite lady, or a humble tradesman: Joseph therefore persevered in his integrity, but thought there would be no harm in writing what had passed that day to the young lady, and take her directions how to conduct himself; for he had a perfect reliance on her truth, and thought only ill treatment could have induced her to quit an uncle's house, without a friend to help her.

The following day the gentleman's servant made his appearance, but to little purpose, for though Joseph was in the garden, Bertha had gained no information; but she told all she did know of the lady's coming there, the ghosts disturbing her the first night, her subsequent courage, her kindness and sudden resolution to leave them, and that she heard her  
say

say something about going to travel to *Paris*, but she knew no more, and she was sure Joseph knew no more than she—how should he? he never spoke twenty words to the lady.” He asked who was the owner of the castle, she told his name, and with a present of another crown he took leave. Bertha looked at the money, “Ah! (said she) what a pity now I can’t tell where she is; a hundred of these would make one happy for life.”

A very few days after this, the old couple were at dinner, when they heard the trampling of horses; they hastily opened the door, and beheld, to their great astonishment, a carriage with three attendants, and in the carriage Joseph saw his master, Count Wolfenbach: struck with wonder, he forgot to tender his services, but stood staring at him until he alighted. Being conducted into the parlour, one of the horsemen with him, “Friend Joseph (said he) I have sold this estate, and next month another family will take possession of it.” “Good Lord! (cried Joseph) what will become

come of me and Bertha?" "Don't be uneasy, friend Joseph, I shall take care of you; I have another estate in Suabia, a fine house and gardens, in perfect order; Bertha and you shall have the care of it, with a servant under her to keep it clean, and a man under you to work in the gardens—what say you to that?"

"I am much obliged to your Lordship (answered the honest man;) 'tis rather late in life for me to travel, but I must obey your pleasure, and if you have not already got a man and woman there, I know a very industrious couple hard by, the only friends we have, who will be glad to go with us." "By all means, (said the Count, eagerly) but pray are you pretty quiet now; do the ghosts trouble you, as has been foolishly talked of?"

"I am seldom disturbed, my Lord, (answered Joseph;) I never saw nor heard any ghosts."

"I believe not, (said the Count;) the silly imagination of some people conjure up frightful fancies, and endeavor to impose them upon others as realities; but pray Joseph how soon can you leave this house? my man Peter will

will go with you to the other ; you will find a much better habitation, and can take your friends with you." " In about a week, my Lord, I shall be ready." " Not sooner?" " I must speak to my friends ; we must get our little domestic business put in order, and then we shall be fit to go comfortably, though 'tis a long journey for old folks, my Lord." " Nothing at all—nothing all, (said his Lordship ;) Peter will see you safe. We shall be with you next week—use all the dispatch you can, for I have alterations to make in the house, before I give it up."

The Count and his attendants mounted their horses and rode off, leaving Joseph in great perplexity. Bertha, ignorant of the events which caused his uneasiness, was well pleased to change her abode for a better one, and was in a violent hurry to call on Pierre and Jaqueline, but Joseph requested she would wait another day, 'till he had considered the matter. He well knew, that if the Count visited the other wing, he must be  
sensible



sensible that it had been lately inhabited. If he was innocent of his conjectures, and unconcerned in the late transactions, he would judge unfavourably of Joseph ; if, on the contrary, he had any hand in carrying off the lady and murdering her attendant, the removal of the body would convince him some person must have been there ; his suspicions would naturally fall on himself, and perhaps he might be sacrificed also. These considerations greatly distressed Joseph ; every way he saw perplexity and vexation, and was afraid to throw himself into the Count's power, though he saw no chance of avoiding it. He had been every day to the other apartments, except the preceding one, and found every thing tranquil ; but now that the Count was in the neighbourhood, he was afraid to go : yet he thought the only way to avoid suspicion, or impending evils, would be to replace the body on the bed, at all events.

Endeavouring to derive courage from necessity, he trembling ventured to the private passage,

passage, but, to his surprise and horror, the lamps were all extinguished; he knew they must have been put out, otherwise they would have lasted that day; he therefore hastily turned back, and regained the house. After a little deliberation he went up the staircase, and opening every apartment very softly till he came to the door which led to the gallery of the other wing, he found it fastened on the other side. This circumstance confirmed his fears: he listened some time, and plainly heard voices, but could distinguish nothing; he then retreated with the same care, locking up all the doors on the outside, for whether it was the Count and his servant, or a set of banditti, he thought his situation equally dangerous.

Poor Joseph could not communicate his fears to Bertha, and therefore his uneasiness passed off for indisposition, but he had a sleepless night.

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The next morning he went to the post town, and, to his great joy, received a letter from Matilda. She was safe at Paris; and the Marquis and his Lady, under the greatest apprehensions for their sister; convinced she would never return to the Castle, should she be alive, and grateful to their old friend Joseph, offered him and his wife an asylum at their house, thinking they might one day or other be sacrificed to the Count's revenge.

Scarcely had he read this letter, when he saw Peter, the Count's servant, coming towards him; he had the paper still in his hand, "So, Joseph, you have been at the post, I see." "Yes, (answered he, with as much ease as he could assume;) I hear now and then from a sister of mine, who is in service at Paris: but is my Lord here in this town, Peter?" "Yes, (replied he) his Lordship is settling some business with his tenants." "Well, (said Joseph) next week we shall be ready to go, Peter." "Very well,

well, (cried the other, with a smile) and they parted.

On Joseph's return to his house, he began to consider of his removal; he was sure he could not depend on the Count, but how to get away without his knowledge was the difficulty; after much deliberation, he took his resolution, and going to Bertha, told her the Lady Matilda was in Paris, and had sent for them to live with her. She was out of her wits with joy: "O, (cried she) that will be a thousand times better than living in the Count's house; yes, yes, let's go, the sooner the better, say I." "But, (said Joseph) you must not say a word to the Count, or any body, for the world." She promised secrecy, and they began to contrive about taking away their little matters, and setting off in a day or two.

That night Joseph thought to get some rest, though his fears still remained, and kept him waking for some hours: about midnight he



he dropped asleep, but was soon awakened by a great smoke and a terrible smell of fire. He hastily got up, and opening the door, the flames burst in upon him; he ran to the bed and called Bertha to follow him; she jumped out, as he thought, for that purpose: he got into the court, and saw the other wing also on fire, and presently the building he came out of fell in. He called Bertha; alas! she was smothered in the ruins. The whole building was now in flames. He ran to the stable, got the horse, and riding through the wood as fast as possible, a contrary way from the town, he stopt not till he came to the foot of a mountain; with difficulty he crept off his horse, and threw himself on the ground. “ Bertha! my dear Bertha, I have lost thee for ever; I am now a poor forlorn creature, without a friend in the world: why did I fly,—why did I not perish in the fire with my wife? What a coward I am! O, that cursed Count, this is all his doings; I expected he would seek my death, but poor Bertha, she was unconscious of offence  
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to the barbarian, yet she is gone, and I am left desolate who ought to have been the sufferer." Exhausted by grief and lassitude the wretched old man lay almost motionless for some hours, when Providence conducted a carriage that way, with a lady and gentleman in it, and two attendants on horseback. Seeing the horse grazing and an elderly man lying on the ground, the gentleman stooped the carriage, and sent a servant to him: he explained his situation in a brief manner, which when the domestic informed his master of, he ordered he should be brought and put into the carriage, and the horse led on by the servant to their seat.

We will now return to Matilda, who with her faithful Albert, arrived at Paris without meeting any accident. They soon found the Hotel de Melfont, and Matilda writing a short billet to the Marchioness, reposed herself a little after the fatigue of her journey.

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In less than three hours the Marchioness arrived in her carriage, and entered the room with that delight in her countenance which plainly testified the pleasure she expected to receive in the company of her young friend; she flew towards her, and embraced her with a warmth that affected the grateful heart of Matilda to tears. "Welcome, a thousand times welcome, my dear Miss Weimar; the friend of my poor sister must be the friend of my heart! Charming girl! (said she, gazing on her) that countenance needs no recommendation; what do I not owe my Victoria." Matilda, in returning her caresses, involuntarily started and repeated Victoria! "Yes, my love, that is my sister's name; you know her only as the unhappy Countess of Wolfenbach, I suppose: but let me see your faithful Albert, to whom I hear you are greatly indebted" "I am indeed madam, (replied Matilda) my whole life at present is and must be a state of obligation." "Dismiss that idea, my dear Miss Weimar, and feel that you have the power of obliging  
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in your society those whose study it will be to convince you how grateful they are for the favour you confer on them." Matilda bowed and kissed the hand of the Marchioness, with an expression in her eyes that spoke volumes to the heart. Albert now entered the room; "My good friend, (said the Lady) I hope you are well; I wished to see you, to thank you for your services to this young lady." "I humbly thank your Ladyship, (cried Albert) but I have only done my duty, and when you know my mistress you will think so, for she deserves all the world should serve her." "I doubt it not, (replied the Lady) and after my first care to render your mistress happy, my second shall be to make the remainder of your days comfortable." Neither Matilda nor Albert could refrain from tears. "Come, come, (said the Marchioness) let us be gone; my carriage waits; the Marquis is impatient to see you, and I have a thousand questions to ask about my dear sister." Ah! thought Matilda, how shall I unfold the dismal tale—



how must I wound a bosom so tender and affectionate ! This reflection threw her into a melancholy reverie, as the carriage drove on. The Marchioness observed it, and taking her hand, “ We are not strangers, my dear Miss Weimar ; I have only been to meet my younger sister and introduce her to my husband, already prepared to love her.” Matilda, overcome by a reception so kind, cried out, whilst sobs spoke the genuine feelings of her heart, “ Dear madam, you oppress me with your generosity and goodness : O that I may be found, on further knowledge, to deserve your good opinion.” “ I am persuaded of it, (replied the other) and if you please, (added she, with a smile) here ends the chapter of favours, obligations, and such kind of stuff, as I have an utter aversion to.”

By this time they were arrived at the hotel, and the Marchioness led her young friend to the saloon, where the Marquis sat expecting them. “ Here, my Lord, permit me to introduce to you my younger sister ;  
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I bespeak your affection for her, and think you will find no difficulty in bestowing it."

" You judge right, my beloved Charlotte: you sister claims a double share of my esteem from her own merit, legible in her countenance and your introduction. Having saluted and led her to a chair: I am charmed (added he) that our dear Victoria has procured us such a delightful companion; she must have sacrificed a great deal to give us pleasure, in losing your society." Matilda, unable any longer to repress her feelings, burst into tears. Both were alarmed; the Marchioness, taking her hand, " Dear Miss Weimar, you have something on your spirits; tell me, pray tell me, did you leave my sister well? you have, I think, avoided mentioning her." " Ah! madam, (she replied) I am very unfortunate that my introduction to you must occasion pain and sorrow; yet I trust the dear lady will be the care of Providence, though alas! I know not where she is." " Not know where she is? (exclaimed the Marchioness) good heavens! has she then left the Castle?" Matilda then

then entered into a detail of every event that had happened at the Castle, the death of the attendant, and the absence of the Countess. Perceiving the agitation and distress of her auditors, she added, "I have little doubt of the poor Lady's safety, from a persuasion that if any ill was intended towards her, they would have destroyed her, as well as the servant."

"You judge very properly, my dear Miss Weimar: be comforted, my Charlotte; your friend's observation is founded on truth and reason; I hope, e'er long we shall hear from the injured sufferer, or else (said he, raising his voice) by heavens! neither oaths nor promises shall prevent me from publicly calling on the Count to produce her." This threat alarmed his Lady, and suspended her grief. "Tell me, my sweet girl, are you in her confidence—do you know my sister's story?" "Indeed, madam, I do not; Joseph, whom I have mentioned, is the only one acquainted with her woes, and he is bound by oath not to reveal them without her leave; unfortunately I postponed a recital which  
other\_

otherwise might have been a clue to trace her now." " Dear unhappy sister ! (cried the Marchioness) how severe has been your punishment ! Another time, my beloved Miss Weimar, I will acquaint you with all I know relative to her situation : I trust heaven will protect her, and therefore I will not sadden your heart now, nor give you only sighs and tears for your reception, when we wish to make you cheerful and happy." With a deep sigh, which she endeavoured, though in vain, to repress, she conducted Matilda to the apartments appropriated for her, and embracing her, " You are dearer to me than ever ; the child of misfortune, as you just now styled yourself, and the friend of my sister, has entire possession of my heart ; love me but half as well as I feel inclined to do you, and I shall be very happy. Matilda replied in the most affectionate and grateful terms. The Marchioness insisted upon her taking a few hours rest, previous to their meeting at supper.



When she was alone she began to reflect on her situation ; a recollection of past distresses impeded the satisfaction she must otherwise have felt for the fervent reception she had met with. An unhappy orphan, thought she, without a single claim on the world, from affinity or natural affection—a dependent on the bounty of friends, even for my daily subsistence, and of which I am liable to be deprived by a hundred accidents ; is it possible any one can be more unfortunately circumstanced than myself ? Yet, when I left my uncle's house, could I have hoped for such a protection as I am now under ? O, I will not despair, heaven will preserve me, if I persevere in virtue and integrity ; if I can acquit myself of wilful error, and dare appeal to the rectitude of my sentiments, when misfortunes and distresses befall me, I will kiss the rod of correction, and submit with resignation to the Almighty will.

Composed a little in her mind, she dropt a sleep for above three hours, and then rose, refreshed

freshed and with recruited spirits. She was received by her good friends with the greatest and most flattering marks of kindness, and her grateful heart impelled her to return them by every attention in her power. The Marquis said, it was time, from Albert's age, that he should be laid up to rest; his honesty and affection to Miss Weimar deserves reward, I shall therefore allow him something above the wages he has had, and only request he will superintend my stables, and see that they take proper care of my horses, but on no account to take an active part in the business. Matilda most gratefully acknowledged this kindness to her old friend, whose wellfare was very near her heart. The Marchioness told her they had intended leaving Paris in about ten days, now, said she, I shall feel great reluctance to quit France without obtaining some knowledge of my poor sister's destiny; but as you expect to hear from Joseph, I will still try to flatter myself he will give you some information concerning her. Matilda encouraged the hope as it appeared to compose

her, but she thought it a very slender one.

Two days passed swiftly away. The Marchioness carried her young friend round the city, pointed out every place worth observation, or that could afford amusement. Matilda was in a new world: the polite and sensible conversation she now enjoyed was so different from every thing of the kind to which she had been accustomed, that she was mortified at her own deficiencies, and most assiduously endeavoured to profit by the good sense and elegant manners of her protectresses.

The third day after her arrival the Marchioness was to have an assembly. Matilda requested she might not appear, as the clothes she had were by no means suitable to such an occasion. "Indeed, my love, I cannot excuse you; that objection shall soon be done away (said her friend.) And presently some elegant silks, laces, linen, &c. were produced for her acceptance. "These things are for  
my

my younger sister; she must not presume to refuse a small testimony of affection from her elder one." Before Matilda could reply several trades people came in, and the Marchioness gave orders every thing must be ready that evening; which was promised. When they were alone she kissed the hand of her benefactress, "O, madam, in what a gracious manner do you confer favors, without wounding the feelings of the person obliged." "A truce, if you please, (said her friend) to your—Oh! and Ah! the favor, if any, is conferred on me by your acceptance; but once for all, I beg it may be understood, I acknowledge you as my sister by adoption; I have no children, therefore, in the rights of a sister, you have a claim to participate with me in every thing; you must only bring yourself to submit to the commands of eldership, and let the words favor and obligation be blotted from your vocabulary." Saying this, she hastened from her, and left Matilda overwhelmed with grateful emotions. Before she had recovered Albert appeared,



“ Pardon me, madam, for coming up, but I longed to tell you what a blessed family we are got into; such kindness as I am treated with! such good servants, all doating on their Lord and Lady! O, it was a happy day when we entered the gates of Paris! I hope, my dear young lady, you think so too?”

“ I do indeed, my friend; I have a thousand obligations to this noble family; and 'tis not the least of them, that they have provided for you, to whom I shall always think myself indebted for every good I enjoy.” Albert, overcome by this acknowledgement, hurried from her, tears of joy running down his cheeks.

In the evening Matilda's clothes were brought home: the servant, who was ordered particularly to wait on her, dressed her in the most fashionable style. When the Marchioness came into the room, she was charmed with her appearance. “ My love, (said she) you will cause variety of emotions this evening; I foresee an abundance of admiration

ration and envy, when I introduce my lovely relation, for such you are remember; but there are two families I wish you to like; the Countess De Bouville and her daughter, and Madame De Nancy and her sister Mademoiselle De Bancré. You will receive a hundred professions of admiration and esteem from every one, but these ladies will speak from their hearts, and I trust they will thank me for the acquisition of a friend for their select parties." "You leave me nothing to say, my dear madam, but a repetition of the same words, and the same feelings for your uncommon goodness; I will study to deserve your recommendation, and to render myself agreeable to the ladies, as the only proof I can give of my sensibility."

The Marchioness conducted her to the saloon, and soon after a croud of ladies and gentlemen made their appearance; to whom she was severally introduced, and a buzz of admiration, with a hundred audible compliments circulated through the room: at length

two ladies addressed the Lady of the house with an affectionate freedom that told Matilda they were the persons she was bid to love; nor was she mistaken. "My dear Countess, (said the Marchioness) for this young lady I bespeak your friendship; not only because she is a relation of mine, but because I am persuaded Miss Weimar has merit of her own to recommend her to your esteem, and that of your charming daughter." "You could not have paid us a greater compliment, (answered the Countess, saluting Matilda;) this young lady's mind is legible in her countenance. Adelaide, (said she, turning to her daughter) I present you an amiable companion, whose esteem you must endeavour to merit." She joined their hands. "You could not, my dear madam, (replied the young Lady) have given me a command more agreeable to my inclinations." "You do me great honour, ladies, (said Matilda) in your approbation: it must be my care to merit the distinction which I already perceive will be necessary to my happiness." The young

young ladies were indeed mutually struck with each other. Mademoiselle De Bouville was an only daughter, and, contrary to the general fashion in France, had been educated at home, under the eye of a respectable mother, who, though she submitted to the frivolities, the gaities, and round of trifling amusements which engage the attention of that lively nation, yet found time to superintend and direct the education of her child, by which she avoided the stiff monastic air of a convent, and was equally unacquainted with the follies and vices which too generally prevail in those seminaries of education; for though they do not always incur general censure, yet it is extremely difficult to discriminate, as too often it is the punishment of profligacy to be confined in a cloyster; and what injury a person of that description may do amongst a number of young people, some with weak heads, and others with bad hearts, cannot be expressed nor thought of without horror.

Adelaide



Adelaide De Bouville had a very pleasing person, great sweetness of temper, and a cultivated understanding; she was near twenty, and had been for some time addressed by Monsieur De Clermont, son to the Marquis of that name, an amiable and accomplished young man; and it was expected by their friends the union would take place when the young Count De Bouville returned from his travels: Adelaide being particularly fond of her brother, made a point of waiting till she could have his presence at an affair on which her happiness must entirely depend. She was charmed with the introduction of Miss Weimar to her acquaintance, and sought, by the most polite attention, to obtain her esteem. Matilda was equally delighted with her companion, and they soon after had an additional charm to their party by the arrival of Madame De Nancy and Mademoiselle De Bancre; the latter was near two and twenty, very handsome, a great share of good humour, and a most enchanting vivacity; her sister being sacrificed very early in life to an elderly man,  
every

every way unworthy of her, except by his immense fortune; he used her extremely ill, always out of humour and suspicious: she suffered under his tyranny five or six years; he then died, and left her mistress of a large independence, the expenditure of which did her great honor. Her sister, who had witnessed her bad treatment from an unworthy husband, determined never to marry; they resided together, equally beloved and respected.

Matilda was charmed with her new acquaintance; a swarm of beaux surrounded them, but she thought their conversation, their fopperies, and fulsome compliments truly disgusting, on a comparison with the sensible and elegant manners of her newly-acquired female friends.

When the company separated Matilda received numerous invitations, every one professing themselves delighted with the charming Miss Weimar; but those professions were  
not

note qually sincere. A Mademoiselle De Fontelle beheld her with envy and dislike: she was a young woman of family and large fortune, had been taken about two years from a convent, where she was placed on the death of her mother; and soon after that period her father also died suddenly, and left her solely to the care of an aunt, an old gay coquet, whom every body despised, yet every body visited, because she had large parties, elegant entertainments, and high play. Under the care, if it can be so called, of this ridiculous old woman, Mademoiselle De Fontelle had acquired all the follies and vanities incident to youth and beauty, when under no restrictions, no proper precepts or example. She detested handsome woman, was desirous of engrossing universal admiration to herself, had a malignant heart, yet as far as a coquet's affections could be engaged, hers were devoted to the young Count De Bouville; but as her attractions were not powerful enough to detain him from pursuing his travels, she flirted with every one that came in her way, to the  
utmost

utmost extent that French manners and customs would allow among young persons, where there is certainly more reserve than in any other country (Spain excepted.) Therefore 'tis no uncommon thing for girls gladly to marry the man pointed out by the parents, if he is ever so old, ugly, or little known; the restraint laid upon them is so strict, and their conduct so narrowly observed, that to enjoy liberty they marry; from hence proceeds that levity for which the married ladies in France are so remarkable, and which has given rise to an almost general censure, which they do not always deserve: for those who have studied the characters and manners of the French ladies frequently declare, there is more the semblance than reality of vice in them; and though many are profligate, like some in their neighbouring kingdom, who apparently carry more modesty and reserve in their outward deportments; yet there are very many amiable French women, who, under their national gaiety of heart and freedom of manners, are most truly respectable in every situation



situation in life. But the old aunt of Mademoiselle De Fontelle was not one of these, nor had she instilled any such sentiments of respectability in her niece, consequently the young lady ventured to the utmost bounds custom or courtesy would allow: she no sooner saw Miss Weimar than she dreaded and hated her; being a stranger, beautiful and engaging, she obtained universal admiration; but when she observed the decided preference and selection of Mademoiselle De Bouville for her companion, she was outrageous. The Count was soon expected home; he would doubtless be attracted by this hateful stranger—the idea was dreadful, and from that moment she was the declared enemy of Miss Weimar, though resolved to cultivate the most violent intimacy with her; consequently when the party broke up, she advanced and solicited the young lady's acquaintance, in the politest manner possible.

When the company had left the rooms Matilda thanked the Marchioness for the  
pleasure

pleasure she had procured her, in the introduction to such charming young women as Mesdemoiselles De Bouville and De Bancre. "There was another lady, (said she) who paid me much attention, and invited my acquaintance." "Yes, (answered the Marchioness) Mademoiselle de Fontelle; but beware of her, my dear Matilda; she is far from being a desirable intimate—I neither like her nor her aunt, Madame de Roch; but I know not how it is, one meets with them every where, and cannot avoid seeing them sometimes in public, but they are never of my private parties, therefore let common civility only pass between you."

The young lady promised to observe her advice, and they separated to their respective apartments.

On Matilda's table lay a letter, which the servant placed there, not to disturb her whilst in company. She hastily broke it open; it was from Joseph: he related the incident respecting

specting the horse, mentioned the gentleman's enquiries, and described his person. It was her uncle. She was terrified and shocked beyond measure, she sunk into a chair, and burst into a flood of tears: "Good heavens! (said she) if he should trace me here: yet so many days before him, I think I may be safe; Bertha was not in the secret, and Joseph I can, I know, depend upon not to betray me." Under the most painful reflections, she retired to rest, but sleep forsook her pillow: the dread of falling again into the power of a man so abandoned gave her the most poignant affliction—"O, that we were in England (said she) I should then, I think, be safe from his pursuit."

She passed a restless night, and in the morning met her friends, with a pale countenance and uneasy mind.

"My dear child, (exclaimed the Marchioness) what is the matter, are you ill?" Matilda gave her Joseph's letter, and expressed

#### CASTLE OF WOLFENBACH.

pressed her fears of being found in Paris by her uncle. Her friends requested she would compose her mind. The Marquis assured her of his protection. "You are not well enough, my love, to go out or see company this morning; we will retire to my dressing-room, and to amuse you from thinking of your own troubles, I will enter upon the story of my unfortunate sister, as far as I know of it, for great part is involved in mystery, and she has taken, she says, the most sacred oaths never to divulge the rest, without permission of another person. My father, Baron Stielberg, inherited from his ancestors, a respectable name, a great share of family pride, and very small possessions, which by wars, and a struggle to keep up the family consequence, had been diminished greatly within the last fifty years. He had no son, a source of eternal regret to him, and two daughters, whom he determined should marry advantageously, or not at all. Our mother died when I was about ten, and my sister eight years of age. We were placed in a convent for six years, at the expiration of which



which time we were sent for home. Our father seemed satisfied with our improvements. We had the good fortune to please, and it was the fashion to admire us. In a few months after our return to the world the Marquis De Melfort, who was on his travels, stopt at Vienna ; we met at an assembly, and a mutual approbation took place ; he was introduced to my father ; and, in short, not to be tedious, his addresses were allowed, for though my father would have preferred a German nobleman ; yet the amiable character of the Marquis, his very large fortune, and an earnest desire to see me settled in his life time, prevailed on him to accede to the advantageous proposals made for me, and in a short time I became the happy wife of one of the best of men. We remained near six months at Vienna, but the Marquis beginning to express a wish of returning to Paris, having been absent above two years. I requested my father would permit my sister to accompany me ; but to this he peremptorily objected. I took leave of my friends and my  
country

country with tears and reluctance. The dear Victoria was ready to expire—it was our full separation, and we had lived in the most perfect harmony with each other: she was my father's favourite, and therefore he did not feel that grief on my leaving him, which might have been expected. I had a consolation—I accompanied a beloved husband, and was received by his friends with the most flattering attention. My sister and I constantly corresponded. In about eight months after my residence at Paris she wrote me, that at an assembly she had met with one of the most amiable men in the world, a Chevalier De Montreville, a gentleman of a noble family, but small fortune, secretary to the French ambassador. The manner in which she described this young man, convinced me she liked him: I was sorry for it, I knew he never would be countenanced by my father. She also added, that Count Wolfenbach was her very shadow—that she detested him, notwithstanding his immense fortune and prodigious stock of love. In my answer, I cautioned

tioned her against indulging a partiality for the Chevalier, as I well knew my father never would approve of it. A short time after I received a very melancholy letter. "Pity me, my dear sister, for I am miserable—I cannot deny my attachment to the most deserving of men: he has been rejected with contempt by my father, and yesterday I was commanded to receive Count Wolfenbach as my destined husband! I hate, I detest him—he is morose, savage, sneering, revengeful—Alas! what am I saying? this man may be my husband—O, my dear sister, death is far preferable to that situation."

"These expressions filled me with extreme grief; my generous husband wrote my father immediately; he besought him not to sacrifice his child,—that if the want of fortune was his only objection to the Chevalier, he would gladly remove that deficiency, and he had both interest and inclination to procure him a handsome establishment: that from the affection he bore me and my sister, it was his earnest

earnest desire to see her happy, if at the expence of one-third of his fortune."

To this letter we received no answer within the expected time. I grew very uneasy, I wrote again to my sister. It was more than a month before I received any return. I have it now in my pocket book : the Marchioness took it out, and read as follows.

COUNTESS OF WOLFENBACH,

TO

THE MARCHIONESS.



*My dearest Sister,*

" JUST recovered from the jaws of death, the lost unhappy Victoria acknowledges the receipt of your kind letter : alas ! the contents have almost broken a heart already exhausted by grief and despair. I have been a wife five weeks, near a month I was confined to my bed ; but if I can, I will be methodical



in the relation of what has befallen me. The letter your generous and respectable husband wrote, unfortunately was delivered by the servant in the same moment with one from the Chevalier. My father believed you acted in concert. Never shall I forget the fury of his countenance. "This insolent Frenchman wants to degrade me into a dependence on him, and marry my daughter to his beggarly countryman." Ah! my father, (cried I) do not judge so unkindly of my excellent brother, his views are for our general happiness." "And that, (said he, interrupting me furiously) can be accomplished without his interference; the Count has a noble fortune, high birth, a title, and is a German—not another word, (added he) seeing me about to speak) not a single objection; on Monday next you become his wife—see that you obey without the least reluctance." Saying this, he left the room, and in a few minutes afterwards I fell senseless from my feat. How long I continued thus, I know not, but on my recovery I found myself on my  
bed,

bed, and Therese with me ; she was bathing me with her tears. " Thank heaven, my dear young lady, you are alive still ! O, what a dismal day for me to see you thus." I thanked the poor creature, her kindness was of service,—I shed a copious flood of tears. Soon after my father sent to know how I did, and to tell me I was expected in the library. I obeyed the summons with trembling steps. The odious Count, I must call him so, was with him. My father advanced, and rudely snatching my hand, " There, my Lord, I give her to you, your day shall be ours." " This day, this hour, (cried he, eagerly, kissing my hand,) do not delay my happiness." A sickness came over my heart—I sunk into a chair. " Victoria ! (cried my father, in an angry voice.) I endeavoured to reply, but burst into tears. " Foolish girl, (said he) receive the honor my Lord does you, in a manner more worthy of yourself and me." He left the room. The Count approached me with a malicious air, " Charming Victoria, am I so very hateful ; has the

Chevalier so many advantages over me, as to engross all your affection?" I started, but indignation roused my spirits,—“ Whatever are his advantages, my lord, or whether he has any real superiority or not, for I make no invidious comparisons; yet if you suppose he is the object of my affections, surely I am unworthy the honour of being your wife; no man of spirit could bear a divided heart; but if he engrosses all, which I neither affirm nor deny, your Lordship will do well, both for your own sake and mine, to renounce all thoughts of me.” “ No, madam, (said he, in the highest rage) your father has given me your hand, and you shall be mine, let the consequence be what it may.” He flung out of the room with a look of vengeance. You may conceive, I cannot describe my situation. In the evening my father told me the Chevalier was gone to Switzerland. From the hour my father rejected him, I gave him up to outward appearance: I wrote and conjured him, if he valued my peace, to think of me no more. His answer almost broke my heart,

heart, "but my commands were sacred, my peace all the good he sought for in this life." When I heard he had quitted Vienna a momentary pleasure seized hold of my heart; he would not be here when I was sacrificed to his rival, nor until I had left the city. Not to tire you, my dear sister, the Monday following I became a wife—spare me the repetition of the dreadful circumstances. The following day I was in a high fever, and continued ill for a month; I received but little attention from the Count—there was more of resentment than tenderness in his manner when he came into my apartment, and involuntarily I used to shrink from his view. However it pleased heaven to restore me to health. I am gaining strength daily, but as yet keep my own apartment;—to-morrow I have engaged to meet our father down stairs to dinner. Pray for me, advise me, dearest sister; depend upon my honour, I will deserve your love whatever becomes of me. Heavens bless you and my dear generous brother.

VICTORIA WOLFENBACH."



“ You must suppose, my dear Miss Weimar, (said the Marchioness) that this letter made us extremely unhappy ; I wrote however, and, fearful the Count might have meanness enough to insist upon seeing her letters, I took little notice of her complaints, but congratulated her on the recovery of her health, desired she would pay attention to it, for the sake of her husband and friends ; in short, it was an equivocal kind of a letter, and I thought could give no offence. After this I heard from her but seldom, and then there was an evident restraint in her style, which hurt me, but which I dared not take notice of. She had been married about eight months, when the Marquis received a letter from the Count, acquainting us that my father was dead, after only three days illness, giving an account of his effects, and inviting the Marquis over to see a proper division of them. I persuaded him to comply. He would not go without me, and I was not sorry for the opportunity offered me to see my sister. We got safe to Vienna. We met the Count and  
his

his lady, who had come from their country seat, about seven leagues from Vienna, for that purpose. We flew into each other's arms, with tears of mingled joy and sorrow. Alas! it was but the shadow of the once blooming Victoria. I surveyed her with surprise and distress: she took no notice, but introduced me to her husband; the cause of the alteration I observed was then explained. Never surely was there a man with a more ferocious countenance; he inspired me with horror the moment I examined him: I felt for my sister, but tried to receive his cold civilities with politeness for her sake. After dinner we were glad to leave the gentlemen to business, and retire to ourselves. "My dearest Victoria, (cried I, embracing her) tell me—tell me all: you are not happy, your fragile form too plainly speaks it." "I endeavor to be contented, (she replied:) my dear father thought happiness must be connected with splendour and riches; he sought to aggrandize his children; I respect the motive, however he has been deceived."

“ The Count, I must own, (said I) is a disagreeable object.” “ My dear Charlotte, (she cried) do not think so meanly of me, as to suppose his want of personal attractions weighs any thing with me—I should despise myself in that case ; neither is it now any preference for another : I have never seen or heard from the Chevalier since my marriage. I will strictly fulfil every duty I have sworn to observe, perhaps time may do much for me ; it will either soften the severity of the Count’s disposition, or habit will enable me to bear with less feeling, evils I cannot prevent. Ask me no questions, my dear sister, I am not at liberty to answer them ; but if you regard my peace, meet my husband with good-humour and complaisance : and now tell me, (said she) of your comforts, your pleasures and mutual happiness—in your felicity I will find my own.” I was drowned in tears, her manner was so solemn, so touching, so resigned, that my heart was wrung with sorrow, and I could not speak. “ Dear Charlotte, (continued she, wiping my eyes) spare me those tears,

tears, I cannot bear them : remember what I have told you, be cheerful when you return to company, or I shall be the sufferer. I met you with tears of joy, 'tis long since they were shed for grief. Here, (putting her hand to her heart) here my sorrows are buried, too deep for that relief—but I have done, dear sister let me enjoy pleasure now in your society." She attempted to smile, it was a smile of woe ; I tried however to suppress my emotions, and to divert her attention ; asked a few questions relative to our old acquaintance, and in about an hour we returned tolerably composed. The Count examined my looks ; I approached him with smiles, chatted about our journey, and I observed his features grew relaxed, and he behaved with great civility. We continued at Vienna a fortnight ; he never asked us to his seat. Victoria conducted herself like an angel ; she was attentive to every word and wish of his ; her deportment was grave but perfectly obliging, so that it appeared more a natural disposition than arising from any particular cause. When all



our business was finished, the Count one morning took occasion to observe his presence was much wanted in the country ; that he had lately purchased an estate in Switzerland, and should go there soon, consequently had many affairs which required his inspection. We took the hint, and finding I must part with my sister, I was very ready to leave Vienna. The day previous to our departure an old friend of My father's paid me a visit ; after chatting some time, " My dear Marchioness, (said he) I sincerely lament the unhappy fate of your charming sister ; she has certainly the worst husband in the world ; she is shut up, denied all society ; he is jealous, cruel, and revengeful : I am sorry to grieve you, but I tremble for her life—she cannot long support such wretchedness. The poor Chevalier, (added he) has been absent from hence ever since her marriage : I am told he is now daily expected ; he will hear most afflictive news, for her happiness is the chief wish of his heart." I answered this worthy man, and told him my sister's reserve, as to her husband's

band's treatment of her : he praised her prudence, and added, your father had two motives in obliging her to marry the Count ; he was disappointed in both, for he was no stranger to her situation before he died. " And what, Sir, was his other motive ?" " An intention to marry a relation of the Count's, but she absolutely refused him, and married another two month's ago. You know, I suppose, added he, that the Count was a widower ?" " No, Sir, I never heard that circumstance." " Why, it is a black story, as it is reported : 'tis said about three years ago he married a young lady, an orphan, of good family, but small fortune, at Bern, in Switzerland ; that he treated her so ill as to cause her death, and left two children, who were put to nurse, afterwards taken from thence, without any one's knowing what became of them ; however your father told me the Count informed him they were both dead. Almost every person believes his wife and children came to an untimely end ; but he is a man of such rank and large possessions, nobody chuses to say much.

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I hinted.

I hinted the affair to your father, but fortune and love was too powerful to be given up, he affected not to believe it; but after his own disappointment, he thought more of his daughter, and had he not been so suddenly cut off, I believe would have interfered; at least, I am sure, would have made some separate provision for her, independent of that bad man her husband."

" You may conceive, my dear Miss Weimar, how much I was shocked at this relation. I trembled for my Victoria, in the hands of such a monster, but alas! we could do nothing. I entreated my good friend to watch the Count narrowly, and to give me information, from time to time, concerning her, who I considered a victim to a villain.

" The following day we took a heart-breaking leave. The Marquis entreated the Count to pay us a visit. " In another year perhaps he might." My sister, dear unhappy creature,

creature, never shed a tear. " My Charlotte, my beloved sister, think no more of me, (said she, an hour before we parted;) my pilgrimage will be short; the hour which gives birth to an unfortunate being (I had forgot to tell you she was with child) will, in all probability, give me everlasting peace: fortunate if the dear infant accompanies me to the grave, if not, O, my sister, consider it as the only remains of the wretched Victoria, who has, does, and ever will love you to her last hour." I will not wound your heart, my dear Matilda, by any further recital of our conversation. When we parted, in presence of her husband, I could have struck a dagger to his heart. She embraced me with fervor, " Heavens bless you, my dear and happy sister! and you, my generous my noble brother, may you both live to enjoy years of uninterrupted happiness." " Doubtless they will, (said the Count, with a malicious smile;) surely you forget we are to meet again at Paris next year, and not taking leave for life." " True, (returned the Marquis;) I thank you



you for the remembrance, Sir,—a few months hence, my valued friends, I hope to see you at Paris.” She tore herself from my arms, and I got into the carriage, more dead than alive. Not to enter into an unnecessary detail, we returned safe to Paris, and in a short time after I received a few lines from my sister, dated from their castle in Switzerland, telling me she was tolerably well, both in health and spirits, but hourly in expectation of an event which might affect both.

“ Near three weeks after this letter we received two ; one from the Count, informing the Marquis, that, to his inexpressible grief, he had lost both wife and child ; the other from the medical gentleman who attended her, informing me of the same event, and that my sister, in her last moments, requested he would write to express her affection and wishes for my happiness with her departing breath.

“ Though

“ Though I had always apprehended this event, yet it caused me inexpressible misery ; and there being no longer any ties to bind us to that detested Count, we never answered or took any further notice of him.

“ About six weeks after the dreadful information we had received, a letter came to me, directed in an unknown hand ; I opened it—judge what were my emotions in reading these words, deeply impressed upon my memory.

“ Your sister lives, though dead to all the world but you ; a solemn vow has passed her lips, never to disclose preceding events without permission—ask no questions, and you shall soon hear more, but more than one life depends upon your secrecy.

VICTORIA.”

“ I flew to the Marquis with this billet ; he was equally surprised and overjoyed, but  
3 naturally

naturally concluded we might have spies upon us, and that therefore we had better continue our mourning the usual time.

“ It was upwards of a fortnight before I heard again, and I grew very impatient; at length I had another letter: this informed me she was confined, that she had reason to hope her child (a boy) was alive. Under that hope she lived, and, notwithstanding her confinement, was better in health than when I saw her last. I might write a few lines now and then, under cover to Joseph Kierman, in a vulgar disguised hand; that she perhaps might never see me more, and meet certain death if her secret was discovered.”

“ This letter, like the former, was in a different hand from hers. I answered it, and from that time, near eighteen years, we have corresponded about once in two months, never oftener, till our last epistles concerning you.

“ The

“ The whole affair is certainly very strange : often has the Marquis vowed to apply either to the Count or courts of justice ; but the letters we received were never written by her, we could adduce no actual proofs of his guilt, and she continually warned us to take no steps without her permission. Thus, in a most unaccountable manner we are prohibited from doing her justice, whilst all the world believes her dead : he lives chiefly at Vienna, a dissipated life ; though from my friend I hear he is at times gloomy, and apparently unhappy : this gentleman however believes my sister and her child dead, nor dare I undeceive him.

“ Thus, my dear Miss Weimar, you have before you all I know of this melancholy affair ; what now is become of this hapless victim heaven only knows,—I cannot think of leaving Paris yet ; the Marquis can scarcely be restrained from exerting himself, and, indeed, in a short time, if we gain no further infor-



information, I shall feel disposed to coincide with his wishes."

Matilda returned the Marchioness thanks for the trouble she had taken in giving this painful relation: she felt deeply for the poor suffering Countess, and could not help joining in opinion, that some decisive step ought to be taken, if she was not heard of soon.

They both waited with impatience to have another letter from Joseph, as he promised to write again about the gentleman and his horse; and the Marquis and Marchioness requested Matilda to offer him and Bertha, in their name, an asylum at Paris, if they had any fears of remaining at the Castle.

Three or four days passed, and nothing new occurred. Mademoiselles De Bouville and De Bancre had frequently called on Miss Weimar, also Madame Le Brune and her niece.

On

On the fifth morning the first mentioned young lady entered the house, accompanied by a very elegant young man, whom she introduced to Matilda as her brother. The Marquis and his lady were rejoiced to see him and gave him the most cordial welcome.

Matilda was uncommonly struck by his appearance; she thought him, (and with justice) the most amiable man she had ever seen. The Count De Bouville was indeed deserving of approbation: he had all the elegance of French manners, without their frivolities, an excellent understanding, and a desire of improving it induced him to visit England, after his tour through Italy and Germany; he had gained knowledge from the different manners and customs of each nation, and returned a truly accomplished young man, with much good sense and polished manners, a strict integrity of heart, and the highest sense of duty and love for his mother and sister. He had always entertained great respect for the Marquis and Marchioness De Melfort, and  
that

that, added to his sister's warm eulogiums on Miss Weimar's perfections, brought him the morning after his return to make his compliments. He had never seen a young woman like Matilda; she was in truth the child of nature; for, though accomplished and well informed, having been bred up in obscurity, never visiting nor being visited, a stranger to young men, to flattery, or even the praises of a chamber-maid, with a most beautiful face, an elegant shape, and many natural if not acquired graces; she was unconscious of her perfections—she knew not the art of displaying them to advantage—she had no vanity to gratify—thought but humbly of herself, and received every mark of admiration and respect as favors to which she had no pretensions. A character so new to the world, which was easily understood in a short visit, from the frankness and naivete of her manners, could not fail of engaging the attention and esteem of the Count. Her person was charming; her conversation and unaffected sweetness insensibly gained upon the heart,  
and

and rendered it impossible to avoid bestowing that homage to which she made no claims. When the visit was over and an engagement made for the Melfort family to dine the following day at the Bouville's. Matilda, with her usual candour, warmly praised the young Count: her friends smiled, but coincided with her sentiments, and expatiated on his good qualities with all the warmth of friendship and esteem. They were yet on the same subject, when a servant entered and delivered a letter to Matilda. "From Joseph, (said she, looking at the address.) "O, pray open it, (cried the Marchioness. She did so, and perusing it hastily to herself was struck with horror at the contents. He was now at the seat of Baron Wolmar, from whence he writes an account of all the proceedings at the Castle. He concludes with telling her the Baron and his niece have given him an asylum, but that the Count's story was still unknown; is desirous of receiving her commands, and bitterly regrets the loss of poor Bertha.

When



When she had looked it over, without a single comment she gave it to the Marchioness, but her looks prepared her friend for some dreadful intelligence. "Good heavens! (cried she) what a villain! every thing now is past a doubt—most certainly he has destroyed my sister, and by burning the castle, sought to make away with the person privy to his transactions."

When the Marquis had read it, "By all means, (said he) let Joseph be sent for immediately, he will prove a material witness, and I am determined, if no news arrives from her shortly, to enter a process against the Count, and oblige him to produce her."

A servant was ordered to set off the following morning to bring Joseph, and the Marquis wrote to thank the Baron for protecting him.

Various and melancholy were their conjectures relative to the Countess, whose  
strange

strange fate they all deplored. "I shall never forgive myself, (cried the Marquis) for not interfering in this business years ago. When I knew she was first confined, though we never understood so clearly the nature of that confinement till she wrote to us of the courage and resolution a young lady, driven by accident to the castle, had shewn, in exploring the way to her gloomy apartments. At the same time she was cautious in withholding any particular information as to the nature of her situation. Maria, her attendant, always wrote for her, nor was any name signed on either side."

"Every circumstance (returned Matilda) convinces me her life is not in danger, for had that been determined on so many years would never have passed, and left her in possession of it." "I hope and wish your observation may be verified, (said the Marchioness.)" "But pray, madam, (cried Matilda) what became of the poor Chevalier after her marriage and the subsequent report of her death?"

"My

“ My friend at Vienna, (replied the Lady) informed me, he returned there soon after the Count carried my sister into Switzerland, and in a short time quitted the ambassador, and talked of visiting Asia, and remaining abroad some years; since which we have never heard of him, whether he is living or not.”

Some company now broke in upon them; and an engagement in the evening prevented any particular conversation.

The following day they were to dine with the Countess De Bouville. Matilda, for the first time in her life, took some pains with her dress, and felt an anxiety about her appearance; yet, unconscious of her motives, she attributed them solely to a desire of pleasing the Marchioness. When they arrived at their hotel, the Count was ready to conduct and introduce them. The Countess received them with pleasure. “ I know, (said she) my good friends, you rejoice with me on the return of my son. We are a family of love,  
(added

(added she, turning to Matilda) therefore you must not be surpris'd to see us a little intoxicated with joy on meeting again after so long an absence." " Indeed, madam, such affectionate feelings do you great honour."

Adelaide was all transport, which was soon after rather checked by the introduction of the Marquis de Clermont and his son: the young men ran into each other's arms. " A thousand welcomes, my dear De Bouville, I impatiently longed to see you." " I believe it, (returned the other, with a smile;) you had powerful reasons, and I have shortened my stay in England considerably on your account." " Apropos, (said the Marquis;) how do you like England, my young friend?" " So well, Sir, (replied the Count) that I could be contented to pass my life there in the bosom of my friends. I consider the English as the happiest people under the sun: they are naturally brave, friendly, and benevolent; they enjoy the blessings of a mild and free government; their personal safety is secured



by the laws ; no man can be punished for an imaginary crime, they have fair trials, confront their accusers, can even object to a partial jury ; in short, as far as human judgment admits can be deemed infallible. Very few, if any, suffer but for actual crimes, adduced from the clearest proofs. Their commerce extends all over the known world ; their merchants are rich and respectable, the first nobility do not disdain an alliance with them, they are considered as the supporters of the kingdom : 'tis incredible to think of the liberal sums subscribed by these opulent, respectable, generous people, on any popular occasion, or private benefaction, without astonishment. The men of fashion are many of them admirable orators, great politicians, and perfectly acquainted with the government of different nations, as much as of their own. The young men, I believe, are the same every where—fond of pleasure, expence, and intrigue ; but the rock on which they most generally split is that spirit of gambling which pervades through almost all ranks of people, dissipates fortunes, distresses

distresses families, hardens the heart, depraves the mind, and renders useless all the good qualities they receive from nature and education. There are very strict laws against play, but those laws only awe the middling or poorer kind of people, the great infringe them with impunity.

“ But I beg pardon (added the Count) for falling into the common mode of travellers, engrossing the attention of the company to myself.” “ I desire you will go on, (said the Marquis ;) I am pleased with your observations.” “ And the ladies, dear brother, (cried Mademoiselle De Bouville) pray tell us something of the ladies.” “ I shall punish your curiosity (replied he, smiling) by and bye. What I most admire in the English, is the great encouragement given to all manufactories, and to all useful discoveries; there ought not to be any poor, that is, I mean beggars, in England, such immense sums are raised for their support, such resources for industry, and so many hospitals for the sick and

aged, that, if proper management was observed, none need complain of cold or hunger; yet in my life I never saw so many painful and disgusting objects as there are in the streets and environs of London. I admire the public buildings, the places of entertainment, and the performers at them; but sometimes, as will ever be the case, liberty degenerates into licentiousness, and the mob will rudely interrupt the performers, and carry their applause or censure in opposition to every effort of their betters: this certainly is an abuse of their freedom, but 'tis an evil they know not how to remedy in a land of liberty.

“As for the ladies, my dear sister.”

“Aye, brother, now for it;—I hate your English belles, they are such monopolizers when they make their appearance at Paris.”

“And yet, Adelaide, I assure you, it is not often you see the most beautiful of them here, doubtless there are very many charming women among the first circles of fashion, who may dispute the palm of beauty with any  
court

court in the known world; but generally speaking, the middling ranks of people are by far the handsomest of both sexes, and I account for it in this manner. In fashionable circles they keep very late hours, play deep, enter into every scheme for amusement and dissipation, without regard to their health or complexions; hence they injure one, and destroy the other: no artificial resources can give brilliancy to the eyes, or health and vivacity to the figure; acquired bloom can never deceive, and the natural beautiful complexions of the English ladies are so delicate and transparent, that art may disguise, but never can improve them. Their ill hours, and deforming their lovely faces by the anxiety of avarice, envy, and passion, when at their midnight orgies, adoring and watching the effects of chance in their favour, destroys their beauty many years before age would have lessened their attractions; for I must confess, (added he, smiling at his sister) the English women, take them all in all, are more fascinating than any other nation I ever saw."

H 3

" And



“ And yet, (said she) you are returned heart-whole, brother?” “ That is begging the question, my curious sister ; but where there are so many charmers, men’s eyes involuntarily wander, and must consider it almost an insult upon the rest to select one, when there are such equal pretensions.”

“ The English ladies are much obliged to you, Count, (said the Marquis de Melfort) and we shall soon have an opportunity of judging if your picture is over-charged, as we design visiting England within this month.”

This declaration conveyed no pleasure to any of the party. The De Bouville’s were already so much prejudiced in favour of Miss Weimar, that they were hurt at the idea of parting: the Count particularly felt uneasy, though he could not express it upon so short an acquaintance.

Matilda was highly pleased with Monsieur De Clermont, her friend’s lover; he was polite, sensible

sensible and intelligent; the Marquis, his father, lively, chatty and attentive to the ladies.

The dinner hours passed very agreeably, and they regretted that an assembly in the evening must break in upon their party.

The young folks had an hour to themselves: the Count paid Matilda the most marked attention; congratulated his sister on the acquisition of such a friend, and hoped some event, favourable to his wishes, might prevent their tour to England, though he acknowledged the hope a selfish one. After chatting on various subjects, the Count accidentally enquired of Matilda, if she liked Paris as well as she did Vienna? The question confused her, and she replied, with some hesitation, she had never seen Vienna. "I beg your pardon, madam, (said he) I understood you came from thence." "No, brother, Miss Weimar resided in Switzerland." "At Berne, madam? (asked he.)" "No,

Sir, (answered she, still more confused) I chiefly resided in the country." The Count saw by her manner he had been guilty of some impropriety, though he hardly knew of what nature; he was therefore silent, and she recovered from her embarrassment.

In the evening the company began to assemble; amongst the rest that eternal gad-about Madame le Brune, and her niece, Mademoiselle De Fontelle. The Count was obliged to pay his compliments, and receive their congratulations on his return; which done, he hastily returned to the side of Matilda.

The envious De Fontelle could not bear this; she made her way to them, took the hand of Matilda, called her her sweet friend, assured her they must be violently intimate, she was quite charmed with her; with a hundred such delusive compliments, as meant nothing, and to which the other only replied with a cold civility. All at once, turning quickly to her,

her, " Bless me, Miss Weimar, I forgot to ask if you have a relation of your name now in Paris?" The roses forsook Matilda's cheek, she trembled, and could scarce stand; every one observed her confusion; the Count caught her arm. " Bless me! (cried Mademoiselle De Fontelle) has my question disordered you; I only asked because I was in company yesterday with a gentleman of your name, just arrived from Germany."

This was enough for the unhappy girl—down she dropt, and had not the Count been attentive to her motions, and caught her in his arms, she must have fallen to the ground. Every body was alarmed, and crowded round her, the Marchioness particularly so; she was carried into another room, the Count still supporting her, and followed by his sister. It was some time before she returned to life. The first objects that struck her, was the Count, holding her in his arms, the Marchioness on her knees, applying salts, and Mademoiselle De Bouville pressing her hand.

H 5

"O,



“ O, madam ! (cried she, eagerly and trembling) he is come—he is come.” “ Compose yourself, my love, (said the Marchioness) no one is come that can hurt you.” “ Yes, yes, (answered she, hardly knowing what she said) ’tis he, he will carry me off, he will take me from you.”

Her friend still endeavoured to sooth and calm her spirits. The Count and his sister were surprisèd; they saw there was some mystery, but forebore any enquiries.

It was some time before she was perfectly restored: they urged her to return to the company—she felt a repugnance, “ I fear that Miss ——” “ Fear nothing, madam, (interrupted the Count;) you have friends who will protect you with their lives.” She looked at him with an expression of gratitude, but said nothing. She arose, and with feeble steps attended her friends into the saloon.

Mademoiselle

Mademoiselle De Fontelle officiously came to congratulate her return. The amiable De Bancre felt real concern, and expressed it with feeling, and without exaggeration.

Matilda, sensible of the kindness of her friends, and ashamed of the observation she had attracted, tried to acquire new spirits; but it was an endeavour only; her eyes were incessantly turned towards the door, she dreaded every moment she should see her uncle enter, and nothing could exceed her joy when the evening closed and they were seated in the Marquis's carriage.

“ O, madam ! O, Sir ! ’tis assuredly my uncle—he will know where I am, and tear me from you.” “ Do not afflict yourself, my dear Miss Weimar, (answered the Marquis ;) if it should be him, he shall prove his pretensions before he gets any footing here, much less take you from our protection.

Poor Matilda thanked him with a grateful heart, and retired to her bed, but not to sleep : her mind was greatly disturbed, “ What a poor creature I am, (cried she ;) no father, brother, or protector, not even the clothes I wear my own property ; if this man, this uncle claims, who can dare detain me ? What are the evils which may befall me ?—whatever becomes of me, I will not embroil my friends. Happy, happy Miss De Bouville ! (said she) you have a mother, a brother to protect you ! Such a brother ! what an amiable man ! O, I never knew my wretchedness ’till now, that I am humbled to the dust !” Under these melancholy impressions she passed the night, and when morning came was in a high fever.

The servant who came to attend her was alarmed at her indisposition, and flew to inform the Marchioness, who instantly went to her apartment. She found her very ill. A physician was sent for, who ordered her to be bled and kept very quiet. About noon the  
Marchioness

Marchioness left her asleep, and had scarcely entered the parlour, when she was informed a gentleman requested to speak with her; she ordered his admittance.

A middle aged man, of respectable appearance, politely entered the room. "I must apologize to your Ladyship for my intrusion, without sending in my name, which I now avow to be Weimar, and I am uncle, I may say father, to a young lady of that name now in your house. I fear madam, you have been strangely imposed upon to afford her protection; it is painful to a person so nearly connected as I am to that unhappy girl." "I beg your pardon, Sir, for interrupting you, but I have no person under my roof that answers to your description; you are therefore, I presume, in an error as to the lady you allude to." "I believe not, madam, (answered he, rather haughtily;) I come here to demand my niece, Matilda Weimar, and through her to discover a servant with whom she went off, after



after robbing me." "Robbing you, Sir! take care what you say; you shall bring proofs of your assertions, and then we will answer you: at present Miss Weimar is safe in our protection, and you will find, Sir, she has powerful friends to guard her, and expose those who are her enemies." "'Tis well, madam, (replied he) you will hear from me in another manner." He bowed and quitted the house.

She was glad he did not see the Marquis, at the same time she felt they were in an awkward predicament.

Soon after the Count De Bouville and his sister called on her. "My dear madam, (said the latter) how does our charming young friend? we have been quite unhappy for her indisposition." "You are very obliging, my dear Adelaide; she well deserves your solicitude, and I am sorry to say she is really very ill this morning." "Ill! (cried the Count, eagerly;) O, madam, has she

she any advice—has she a physician?" "Yes, (replied the Marchioness;) I hope there is no danger,—her spirits are hurried and she is a little feverish."

The Count walked about the room. His sister said, "Will you pardon me, madam, if I tell you the strange reports we have heard this morning?" "I shall thank you for the communication, (replied the other.) "This morning early Mademoiselle De Fontelle called on us, O heavens! (said she, eagerly) no wonder Miss Weimar fainted last night; why she turns out to be an impostor, and a shocking creature. Who, Miss Weimar, (cried my brother) impossible, madam; go and circulate that envious tale some where else, there will be no credit given to it here. You are very ready, Sir, to insult your friends, and take the part of strangers; but I assure you (added she, haughtily) I have no cause to envy Miss Weimar, and should be extremely unhappy to be thought like her. Seeing my brother smile contemptuously.

" Well,

Well, (said she) 'tis of little consequence to me if her uncle is come in search of her; if she run away from his house with a servant, and jointly robbed him of his property, and now has contrived to impose herself upon the Marchioness for a different person; perhaps she may elope with one of her servants next, the thing is nothing to me, only people ought to be careful how they introduce improper persons into a circle, though they *are beauties* and objects of *envy*—envy indeed! I shall never forget the pretty idea. She flung out of the room, leaving us almost petrified with astonishment. When my brother recovered, he said, What I say now, (cried the Count, interrupting her) that I will stake my life upon the honour and integrity of the young lady—that ingenuous countenance speaks a heart which never knew deception.

“ You judge rightly, my dear Count (said the Marchioness :) I have not time to explain things now, but be assured she is truth and virtue itself; the servant, a worthy and very old

old man, who knew her from her infancy, is now in my house; he fled with her to save her from dishonour, from the wretch who now pursues her." "Heaven and earth! (cried the Count) where is the miscreant, I will haunt him through the world for daring to asperse her character." "Softly, my good friend, (returned she, smiling) your interference will do no good; the Marquis and myself take upon us to do her justice; meantime you may pay him a visit, and your sister shall just step up and see my patient, provided she is very silent." "My best respects, Adelaide, (said he.) "O, doubtless, (returned the Marchioness) we shall make abundance of compliments and fine speeches, but it will be by dumb show, for I prohibit talking."

Being let blood, had checked the fever, and Matilda lay tolerably composed when her friends entered; she rejoiced to see them, and held out her hand. "Yes, (said the Marchioness) we can take hands, but you  
are



are only to tell us how you are." " Much better, my dearest, best——" " Enough, enough, (said the Lady) that's all we wanted to know, so now kiss and part—by and bye you may meet again. My brother, dear Miss Weimar, sends his best respects." " Very well that is sufficient." " Heaven bless you, my love, go to sleep and compose your mind."

The ladies returned to the parlour; the Marquis and Count were there, and expressed great joy to hear so favourable an account of Matilda's health. The Marquis entered into a little detail of her story, and strongly engaged the affection and compassion of the Count and his sister. " I tell you this in secret, (said the Marquis) remember it goes no farther; we have powerful reasons not to extend our confidence, nor withdraw our protection from a friendless orphan recommended to us by a valued relation." " I admire, I honour you (cried the Count, with earnestness;) do not give her up to this pretended

tended uncle: but how shall we silence calumny, how stop the tongue of that malignant girl? We must act as circumstances shall require; I will call at Madame Le Brun's myself, and assure them there is a mistake in the affair, and warn them not to speak ill of my protégée, for I will defend her with my life and fortune."

They now separated; Mademoiselle De Bouville promised to return in the evening, and the Marchioness went out to pay a few visits, and see if the scandal was extended among her acquaintance; to her great mortification she was told of it every where, some condoled with her on being so greatly imposed upon, others affected to resent such a creature should have the assurance to get herself introduced into company, but all agreed, "They saw what she was, nothing but a little pretender, who was a stranger to good breeding; nobody was deceived but the Marchioness, for every one could see art and duplicity in her face."

Thus,

Thus she, who the preceding evening was the most delightful, most engaging, most elegant girl in the world, by one stroke of slander, was deprived of every perfection, and admiration turned into contempt ; so prone is the world to believe ill, and so little dependence is there to be placed on the breath of praise.

The Marchioness was exceedingly exasperated ; she defended her young friend with warmth ;—she congratulated the ladies on their ingenuity, in finding every virtue and every vice, every charm and deformity in the same person, within the space of eight and forty hours. “ Their candour and good nature was highly commendable (she said) and the compliments they paid her judgment were certainly very flattering.”

In this ironical manner she treated the tittle-tattle of the envious and malicious ; but, driving to Madame Le Brun's, she met her niece, just arrived before her, from circulating her scandalous tale : a malignant joy danced  
in

in her eyes, though she was a little confused when she saw the Marchioness. "I beg the favour of speaking to you, Mademoiselle, (said the Lady;) and taking her seat, "I find I am to thank you for presuming to propagate reports to the disadvantage of my relation: you would do well to recollect, Mademoiselle, there is no character so truly despicable as the slanderer and tale bearer; you should also be well informed of the facts you relate, and of their origin in truth, before you asperse characters, or subject yourself to the mortification of being disappointed in your views, and of having the calumny retorted on yourself."

"What views do you mean, madam,—what is it to me whether Miss Weimar is the runaway niece of Mr. Weimar, or not?"

"Your views, (answered the Marchioness,) are pretty evident; but permit me to observe the Count De Bouville's esteem will never be obtained at the expence of veracity and generosity, and it would have been more becoming a young lady of liberal sentiments, in at least a doubtful case, to have suspended her judgment,



ment, and have inclined to the good-natured side of the question ; but I am now to inform you, the whole tale you have, with so much avidity, related, is false ; that Miss Weimar is as irreproachable as she is beautiful, and in a short time the Marquis will severely punish and expose those who dare assert any thing to the prejudice of that young lady : you will do well, Mademoiselle, to profit by the information." Saying this, she arose, with a look of contempt, and returned to her carriage.

When she met the Marquis at dinner she repeated what she had heard, and her behaviour in consequence. The Marquis applauded her proceedings.

" When I left you this morning, (said he) crossing the street St. Honore, I met Monsieur Du Versac, with another gentleman. " This is the Marquis De Melfort, (said he,) and immediately added, permit me to introduce to your Lordship, Mr. Weimar ; we were going to your hotel." " Has Mr. Weimar  
any

any business, Sir, with me." " I have, Sir, (he replied, in a very calm tone of voice ;) I had the pleasure to wait on the Marchioness, but there was a misunderstanding took place." " Suppose we step home to my house, (said Du Versac.) We agreed so to do. When seated, " Now, Sir, (addressing Mr. Weimar) I am prepared to hear whatever you please to say." He then began a long story of taking Matilda from her infancy, after the death of her father and mother ; the tenderness he had treated her with, the education he had given her, his design of giving her his moderate fortune ; mentioned a variety of circumstances to prove his affection, and her subsequent flight with Albert, taking a horse from his stable, and deceiving him with false pretences. As her uncle, he had a right to claim her : her behaviour to him made her undeserving protection, but duty to his deceased brother called upon him to protect his child ; and he would therefore forgive the error she had been drawn into, and receive her as kindly as ever. When he stopt, I replied,

" Sir,

“ Sir, there is much plausibility, also, I believe, great truth in what you have related: you must not be offended if I also state facts exactly as Miss Weimar has related them to us.” I repeated her story; when I came to the circumstance of the conversation between him and Agatha in the summer-house, he started and turned pale, but quickly recovered. I added, that meeting accidentally with a relation of mine, she was recommended to our house as an asylum, which it was my determination to afford her, and I should suppose no uncle of her’s could object to her situation with the Marchioness, who was desirous of considering her as an adopted daughter.” “ I am no longer at a loss to account for her conduct, (replied he;) and so far from blaming, I must applaud her adherence to those ideas of virtue and propriety I had always inculcated in her mind; but she ought not to have taken up things lightly, nor have proceeded to such lengths upon hearing imperfectly a desultory conversation, which, if she had heard the whole, and its true meaning, she would have  
formed

formed a very different judgment of; therefore, at the same time I applaud her discretion, I blame her precipitant decision: however, my Lord, I beg the favor of seeing my niece alone for an hour in your house, before I take any steps equally as disagreeable to myself as to her and your family. I told him I would consult Miss Weimar, without the least interference on my part, and transmit to him this evening her answer."

"This is indeed a very complex piece of business, (replied the Marchioness) but I really think she ought to see him, and I shall conceive it no breach of honor to be within hearing of their conversation; for although not a shadow of a doubt remains with me concerning her truth and innocence, yet I wish to have an investigation of the affair, that I may openly assert both, from a thorough conviction of it."

When dinner was over she went to Matilda's apartment. She was infinitely better,



and proposed getting up in the evening. After a thousand expressions of kindness and assurances of protection, she mentioned the meeting between Mr. Weimar and the Marquis, related the conversation that took place, and his wish to see her.

Matilda clasped her hands, " Oh ! I cannot, cannot see him ! I could not be mistaken. His words,—his actions previous to the scene I overheard in the summer house, leaves no doubts upon my mind ; yet I ought not, I cannot involve my benefactors in trouble : instruct me, tell me, dearest madam, what I ought to do, and that I will do,—your opinion shall decide for me." " Why then, my dear Miss Weimar, I think you had best hear what he has to say." " Not alone, madam." " Mr. Weimar is desirous of being alone with you." " No, my dearest lady, that cannot be ; let me entreat the favor of your supporting presence." " Since you are so desirous of it, (said the Marchioness) and think you can see him to-morrow, I will appoint

appoint him to attend you in the library, the closet adjoining having a very thin partition, I can distinctly hear your conversation, and he will then have no restraint on his words or behaviour."

This plan being adopted, a note was dispatched by the Marquis to Mr. Weimar, signifying that the young lady would be glad to see him the next day, at twelve, if her health would permit.

Poor Matilda dreaded the interview, and the power he might exert over her, yet it was a justice due to her character and friends, that she should confront him; she therefore endeavoured to reconcile herself to the meeting, though she knew it would be extremely painful to her.

Mademoiselle De Bouville payed her a visit in the evening: she was sitting up, and, from the quantity of blood taken from her in the morning, and the little hectic which the fever occasioned,

casioned, she looked uncommonly delicate and beautiful. After saluting her in the most affectionate manner, she said, "I am charged with a thousand compliments from my brother; he has been extremely uneasy, but if he was to see you this evening, I think he would have but little cause for it;—without any flattery, my dear Miss Weimar, you look quite enchanting."

Matilda smiled, but it was not a smile of pleasure. Ah! thought she, if the Count, if Mademoiselle De Bouville knew me, for what I am, a poor dependant, without friends or family—I should have few pretensions to their notice.

Adelaide took notice of her dejection,—  
"Come, my sweet friend, recover your spirits. My brother will be anxious for my return; you must enable me to give a good report, if you are desirous he should have rest to-night." "If I am desirous (replied poor Matilda;) is there any thing I more sincerely wish

with than happiness to you and your amiable brother?" "Well then, (answered Adelaide) you must make haste to be well." "You are very obliging, (returned Matilda;) I am much better, and should be very ungrateful to my friends if I did not exert myself against trifling indispositions."

Adelaide surveyed her with admiration and compassion, her generosity felt an increase of affection from the knowledge of her misfortunes, though she was cautious not to drop a word that might give the other any suspicion that she was acquainted with them.

They parted at night with mutual reluctance, and Matilda endeavoured to compose her spirits for the dreaded interview that was to take place the following day.

When the Marchioness entered her apartment next morning she found her dressing, and much better, which gave her great satisfaction: she encouraged and applauded the



resolution she had assumed; but when the time came, and the name of Mr. Weimar was brought in, she could scarcely keep from fainting. The Marchioness retired to the closet, and he entered; Matilda rose to receive him, he hastily advanced and embraced her, "My dearest child, I rejoice to see you, cruelly as you have used me, miserable as I have been from apprehensions of your safety, I am happy to see you under such respectable protection." He seated her and himself. "The Marquis De Melfort, (said he) has explained to me the cause of your absenting yourself from my house, therefore I am neither surprised nor angry; but surely you acted precipitantly, and on very slight grounds, the conversation you only partially heard and little understood." "I heard enough, Sir, (said Matilda, with some spirit) to inform me I was not in safety in a house with a woman of Agatha's principles." "You entirely mistook the affair, (interrupted he) but before I explain myself farther, tell me, Matilda, is there no gratitude, no affection due to the man  
who

who has supported you from childhood, who took you, a helpless infant, without a friend to protect you from every evil incident to deserted infancy ? Did I not treat you, love you, as a blessing sent from heaven ?”

Matilda was drowned in tears at this representation of her forlorn state ; with a deep sigh she answered, “ Yes, Sir, all this I acknowledge, and heaven can witness for me how grateful I was for your kindness, until my delicacy was alarmed by freedoms I thought improper from our near connexion.”

“ One question more, (said he ;) should you have been offended at those freedoms, (as you call very innocent attentions,) had they been offered by a man who designed to make you his wife ?”

Matilda started, “ His wife ! ’tis a strange question, but I answer, yes, Sir, I should ; for confined as my knowledge of mankind was, nature and decency had taught me the impropriety of such behaviour.”

“ Perhaps, (said he) you carried your ideas of propriety too far ; but doubtless you erred on the right side. But now, Matilda, I am going to disclose a secret, known only to Agatha, and which occasioned the conversation you misunderstood and misrepresented—I am not your uncle.” “ Good God ! (cried Matilda) who, or what am I then ? ” “ That, (replied he) is a question I cannot resolve, I wish for your ease I could do so ; but what I do know, I will repeat. One day I was in the garden, when Agatha came running to me with a bundle in her arms, “ Lord, Sir, the strangest thing ; I am sure I am as innocent as the babe itself, where it came from, or to whom it belongs, but Lord, Sir, here is a child sent you from God.” “ Very much surprised, I uncovered a cloth, and beheld the most beautiful infant I ever saw. I asked her how she came by it : this was her account ; she heard a knocking at the door, and going to open, it, saw a man at a distance, running very fast and a bundle at the gate ; the man was soon out of sight ; she took up the parcel, and found  
the

the child, wrapped in a dimity petticoat, and two or three cambrick handkerchiefs, but no cloaths, and apparently just born ; a bit of paper was pinned to the petticoat, on which was wrote, with a pencil, " Look on this child as committed to your care by the hand of Providence ; be careful of it, and you will not repent it." I was very much struck (continued Mr. Weimar) by such an extraordinary circumstance, but resolved to do my duty : a nurse was provided in the house ; I had it baptized and named it Matilda. I said it was my niece ; having then no other servant but Agatha, and she being faithful to my wishes, as my niece the beloved adopted child was brought up, and had masters of every kind to instruct her. Years rolled away, no enquiry was ever made, and I began to see a thousand graces in this young creature, which insensibly warmed my heart, and taught it what it was to love, a lesson I had never learnt till then. When I returned from France my protégée was improved in beauty and stature ; she knew little of men,



and she was less known by them; I determined to acquaint her with the secret I have related, and to offer her my hand. I deliberated some time in what manner to disclose it, and was consulting with Agatha how to make the discovery when you overheard the conversation, mistook the purport of it, and in consequence of that mistake gave me inexpressible misery."

Here Mr. Weimar stopt. Matilda, who sat almost breathless and stupified, fetched a deep sigh, "Then I am an outcast, a forsaken orphan, without friends or protectors! Gracious heaven! the offspring of guilt perhaps, for who but guilty wretches would give up their child to strangers?" A friendly burst of tears relieved her beating heart.

"Take comfort, my dearest Matilda; permit me to offer you my hand, my heart, I will be your protector through life; I consent that you shall consult the Marquis and Marchioness; you shall make your own  
terms

terms for Albert, whom I shall value for his fidelity to you. If I have mentioned you in Paris as my niece, it was to avoid disagreeable questions, and keep your secret. The marriage may be private or public, as you like, no one will dare interfere with my wife. Think of every thing ; I will return to-morrow for your determination. He arose, he kissed her hand, and left her motionless in the chair.

The moment he quitted the room the Marchioness entered, and, embracing the warm statue, as she called her. " I have heard all, my dear Matilda, and am equally astonished with yourself : his tale is plausible, perhaps true. Whoever were your parents, I should suppose them dead, from their not making enquiries during so many years after their child. Some praise is doubtless due to Mr. Weimar, for his care of you ; his first motives were certainly benevolent ones ; whether he latterly intended you honourable,

or not, cannot be known; he offers to marry you now, in the face of your friends; 'tis possible you might mistake the tenor of the conversation you overheard—at any rate he seems now ready to act with honour. All this I say for Mr. Weimar,—justice demands I should be impartial; now, on the other hand, if your heart is repugnant to his offers; if you cannot be reconciled in your own mind to the account he has given you; if the gratitude due to his care of you in early life is effaced from your heart by his subsequent conduct, and you cannot overcome the disgust it inspired, never think of accepting his hand, to render both wretched. I have adopted you, I love you as a child, and will protect you; in me you shall find the mother you have lost: fear not therefore, my dearest Matilda, to decide as your heart and judgment shall direct; do nothing hastily, take this day and night to reflect and determine with your whole heart to-morrow. I shall, with your permission, inform the Marquis of this extraordinary story, and I am sure his affection

affection for you will coincide with mine."

Whilst the Marchioness was speaking Matilda had time to recover herself from the astonishment she had been thrown into, and still more from the humiliating idea, that she was indeed a friendless orphan, and owed unbounded obligations to a man she had for some time past looked on with detestation.

When the Marchioness was silent the unhappy girl took her hand, and kissing it, with a flood of tears, "My dear, my generous benefactress, do you and the Marquis decide for me, I am incapable of judging for myself; I feel what I owe to Mr. Weimar's humanity—I honour him for his benevolence and charity to a poor deserted infant; he is a good master, and beloved, as I have heard, by his tenants; I may have erred, I may have condemned him wrongfully, yet my heart, my judgment is not on his side. Condescend, dear madam, to direct me; I will take this day



day and night to reflect on every thing I have heard ; have the goodness to inform me in the morning of your own and the Marquis's opinion, and I hope I shall act so as not to forfeit the friendship you have honoured me with."

The Marchioness embraced her with expressions of tenderness, and repaired to the Marquis, to whom she repeated the preceding conversation.

He was very much surprised and puzzled. " We cannot controvert any of the circumstances he has related, and his behaviour to her, from the moment she was thrown on his protection, deserves the greatest praise ; one would scarcely believe a mind capable of such good actions could entertain designs so contrary to honour and the tenor of his former conduct ; his offers now certainly prove his affection, but I own I should be sorry to see such a lovely young creature compelled to be

be sacrificed to a man older perhaps than her father: If there is a mystery in her birth, time yet may bring it to light; however she must determine for herself, but let it be free from the idea of necessity, for on our protection she may rely."

The Count De Bouville, anxious for Matilda's health, and the result of the expected conference, made the Marchioness an early visit; as he had been informed of the preceding circumstances, they made no scruple to relate every particular that had taken place that morning. The Count was very much shocked; he scarcely knew the nature of the sentiments he entertained for Matilda; 'tis true, he admired and esteemed her, from the little observations he had found an opportunity of making on her character, but he possessed too much good sense to be violently attached on so slender an acquaintance; yet he could still less bear the idea, that she should marry Mr. Weimar. A man of quality in France to marry an obscure young woman, without

without even knowing the authors of her being, would, he knew, incur everlasting contempt; yet, were the Germans less proud? but then Mr. Weimar was an elderly man, accountable to no one, lived in the country, detached from the world, and could do as he pleased. In short, he saw insuperable difficulties attending an attachment to Matilda from himself, and the certainty of it gave him more pain than in prudence he ought to have indulged. He had forgot himself, his long reverie surprised his friends; the Marquis interrupted it by asking his sentiments on the story he had heard? He said it was impossible for him to form an opinion; the account, with respect to her birth, was uncommon, yet nevertheless it might be true, such things had happened, and were not impossible; but if Mr. Weimar was just in every particular, although he had a claim upon her gratitude, he could not see he had any to her person, contrary to her inclinations." The Marquis said, "Your sentiments exactly coincide with mine, therefore the young lady must

must determine for herself; for my own part I have little doubt but her birth is noble; her person, her figure, the extraordinary natural understanding she possesses confirms my opinion that so many graces seldom belong to a mean birth or dishonest connexions." "There may be some truth in your observation, (said the Marchioness) but we have seen and heard of many instances where a noble soul has been inclosed within a vulgar body, and honour, fidelity, integrity and attachment are seen in a thousand examples among people of the lowest class, though I grant not in common to be met with; but then every one has not had the cultivation nor accomplishments of Matilda." "Ah! (cried the Count) your remarks are undoubtedly very just; but there are so many natural graces in this lady, that I think with the Marquis, they never could spring from a mean or improper connexion." "I think so too, (replied she) but be that as it may, she shall always command our friendship and protection."

She



She had scarcely said this before a servant entered with a letter, she looked with surprise at the post-mark, and withdrew to the window, she had no sooner opened it and perused two or three lines, than she exclaimed, "Gracious Heaven ! in England, O, my Lord, the Countess is safe in England ?" The Count De Bouville instantly took leave, nor did they attempt to detain him, but engaged his return in the evening, with his mother and sister, if they were disengaged.

He had no sooner left the room, than she eagerly read the contents of her letter as follows :

"My dearest sister will, I know, rejoice when I tell her I have escaped from the worst of evils, perhaps from death, and am safe in the protection of a charming English Lady, Mrs. Courtney, at her villa about three miles from London. The uncertainty whether you have left France, or on your journey to England, prevents me from being more explicit ;

plicit; if you have not left France, write under cover to Mrs. Courtney, Harley-street, Cavendish-square. If this letter is sent after you, hasten to me, dearest sister,—O, what happiness I promise myself in embracing my dearest friends. I hope Miss Weimar is with you; the uncertainty has given me great concern. Do not delay an hour to satisfy your affectionate sister and friend.

VICTORIA.”

“ Good God! I thank thee (cried the Marchioness) this is blessed news indeed.”  
“ I rejoice with you, my dearest love, (said the Marquis) but pray communicate the news to your lovely protégée.”

She hastened to Matilda; she was reclining on her arms, thrown across the table, and weeping bitterly. “ My charming girl do not give way to sorrow, heaven, in its own good time, will send you relief; here is an instance to prove it, (giving her the letter.) Poor Matilda raised her drooping head, and  
hastily

hastily looked it over, clasped her hand with joy, "O, my dearest madam, this is happiness indeed—let me not be so selfish to mourn on a day of joy like this." "Let this, my dear young friend, be a lesson to yourself, never despair; to misfortunes and contradictions to our best wishes, we are all liable, and all must expect; none are exempt from the calamities incident to human nature; to bear those inevitable evils with patience, to acquire resolution and fortitude under them, and to look forward with hope, that you may one day be delivered from them, will blunt the arrows of affliction, and enable you to support them with resignation."

"My beloved, my charming monitress, (cried Matilda) I will try to profit by your advice; the Countess and yourself shall be my great examples—dear lady, how kind to think of the poor Matilda; I wish I could see her, but alas!—" "No sighs, (said the Marchioness) you must and shall be cheerful  
this

this day ; hope, my dear girl, and all may be well yet."

They descended to the parlour, and in the afternoon had the pleasure of hearing Joseph was just arrived with the servant. " Let him come in, (they all cried, as with one breath.) He entered ; poor fellow, he fell on his knees and wept, it was difficult to say whether with joy or sorrow—he felt both ; the sight of Miss Weimar remembered him of Bertha's dreadful fate, though he rejoiced to see her safe. The Marchioness and Matilda ran to raise him. " Welcome, my good Joseph, (said the former) you are come on a happy day." " My dear friend, (said the latter, pressing his hand) do not give way to grief ; we have all our sorrows, but we have our pleasures too, and I have news for you, Joseph. Our good lady is alive, and safe from the power of her enemies." " Heaven be thanked, (said the old man, wiping his eyes) this is blessed news indeed ; and to see you safe too, my dear young madam,



dam, makes me happy, though I can't forget poor Bertha: alas, your ladyship, she was a good and faithful wife; she knew nothing about my lady—poor soul, she kept no secrets from me.” He seemed to feel a reproach for his secrecy.

“ My honest friend, (said the Marquis) your kindness and fidelity to our dear sister deserves reward; in this house you may rest free from care the remainder of your days, and I will settle two hundred livres on you yearly besides.”

Joseph again dropt on his knees, “ God bless your honour! God bless the dear ladies!” And he hurried out of the room, tears of thankfulness running down his cheeks.

“ Good creature! (cried Matilda, wiping her eyes) may the rest of your life be peaceful and happy.”

They

They now again recurred to the subject of the Countess and her letter. The Marchioness expressed her wishes to set off with all possible expedition to England, and within ten days it was fixed they should depart. Matilda heard this determination with a sigh, which did not pass unobserved, though they forbore to notice it; they concluded however she should be left to herself until the next morning, that their opinions might not appear to influence her. For herself, the idea of her obscure birth was a severe mortification; she considered her friends De Bouville and De Bancre as so much her superiors, that she could no longer treat them with that easy familiarity she had been accustomed, though she little thought the former was acquainted with her whole story.

In the evening came the Countess of Bouville and her family, with Madame De Nancy and her sister. After the first compliments, " Bless me ! (cried Mademoiselle De Bancre) what in the world, ladies, have  
you

you done to Mademoiselle De Fontelle ; I met her this morning, and pleading an engagement here as a reason for refusing her invitation, she flew into a violent rage, accused the Marchioness of treating her with rudeness unpardonable ; and for Miss Weimar, she lavished such a torrent of abuse on her, that had I not known her fixed aversion to all handsome women, and a small predilection in favor of a certain person, whose attentions she is fearful of losing, I should have been at a loss to account for her acrimony."

" If the lady has any dislike, or fears respecting me, (answered Matilda, with evident confusion) she does me great injustice ; 'tis impossible I should ever injure her, or clash with any views she has formed." " There is no saying what her views may be, (said the Count) but I will venture to assert, there can be no divided opinion concerning the merits of Miss Weimar and Mademoiselle De Fontelle ; and the jealousy of a mean mind, when conscious of its deficiencies, is natural enough."

enough." "Come, come, (said the Marchioness) no scandal, my good friends: we cannot be hurt by malice, any more than we can be gratified by undue praises at the expence of others."

The uncommon spirits of the Marquis and Marchioness attracted observation, as well as the dejection of Matilda, which she attributed to ill health. The Count and his sister sympathized with her, and the former was so agitated for the event of the following day, that he did not dare ask himself why he was so much interested.

Matilda rejoiced when the evening concluded and she could retire to herself: she was far from well; her anxiety in what manner she should answer Mr. Weimar distracted her mind; she felt the strongest repugnance to become his wife—she was sure she could not be happy with him; if she had wronged him, he never could, she thought, cordially forgive, nor should she ever look



up to him with confidence. She past a restless night, and arose ill and unrefreshed. She entreated her friends to be present; they at first objected, but she was so extremely unhappy at their refusal, that they at length consented to come in after his appearance, if she sent for them.

His name was at length announced, and he absolutely started at the alteration in her countenance. "The solemnity of your air, my charming Matilda) gives me great uneasiness; how great will be my transport to remove every cause of sorrow from your heart, and see cheerfulness restored to your features. Have you acquainted your friends here with my communications?" "I have, Sir, (replied she, endeavouring to collect some firmness) but they decline giving any opinion; have you any objection to their being present now?" He hesitated; "I see no necessity for it—but as you please." She then rung the bell, and requested the Marquis and his lady would do them the favor of their  
company

company. They entered, and after mutual compliments, and they were seated, Matilda addressed herself to Mr. Weimar. "At the time, Sir, when you permitted me to believe I had the honour of being your niece, although sensible of your kindness, and conscious of my obligations to you, for the care of my infancy, I have often taken my heart to task, and upbraided its want of gratitude; what must I accuse myself of now, when I am informed that to your charity alone I am indebted for the advantages I possess. O, Sir, never, never can I return what I owe you—least of all, by becoming your wife; 'tis an honour I do not deserve—" "Pardon me for interrupting you, my dear Matilda: I disclaim the name of obligation; you owe me no gratitude but for my affection; consider how many years you have been the delight, the darling of my heart, and now, when my love is stronger than ever, am I to be thrown off at once; have you no feeling for the wretchedness you doom me to for the remainder of my life?" "Oh! Sir, what can

I say (answered Matilda;) impressions once strongly conceived are difficult to eradicate; the conversation I overheard is ever present to my mind, and could I forget that, then my reverence for my uncle would return, and I should shudder at the idea of a nearer connexion. When I think of it, and indeed, Sir, I have endeavoured to think of it, an unaccountable repugance makes the idea horrible to me; yet after all, if you persist in wishing me to become your wife, I do not think myself at liberty absolutely to refuse, but I tell you candidly, I never can love you; that though I will obey you, and do my duty, I know I shall be miserable, and in that persuasion surely 'tis impossible I can make you happy." "I am sensible (said he) that my age is against me, I cannot expect to be loved like a young fellow, but my unremitting attentions to please will make me deserving your esteem." "Well, Sir, (said Matilda, hastily) it is fit you should prefer your own happiness to mine, I have no right to refuse, nor any way of discharging the obligations

tions I owe you for the care of my early life, but by the sacrifice of the maturer part of it."

Unable any longer to struggle with the grief and horror that oppressed her, she burst into tears. Her friends felt for her, but were as yet silent. Mr. Weimar took her hand and kissed it, "Cruel Matilda, is this the return for all my tenderness; but I do not prefer my own happiness to yours; consider, pardon me if I say, consider your situation; with all the charms you possess, such is the cruel prejudice against those who have neither friends nor family to protect and provide for them, that in France you could not hope or expect any proper establishment." "Hold, Sir, (said she, with indignation) do not insult me; I know what I am, and since I am unworthy of an establishment in France, I never will have one in Germany. No, Sir, you have now convinced me, if I cannot honour you I ought not to degrade you. I will retire to a convent: I will become a lay-sister, 'tis perhaps the line Providence intended for me;



be that as it may, you have convinced me I ought not, nor I solemnly declare I never will be your wife." She spoke with a force and spirit as surpris'd them all. "Do not be rash, Matilda; I offer you a handsome fortune; you shall no longer be confined in the country, as my wife, you shall have a house at Berne, at Laufanne, or where you please; every pleasure shall attend you; the Marquis himself shall secure your future fortune: do not be offended for trifles, and what never was intended as an insult; trust to my love to create an interest in your heart."

"No, Sir, (answered she) the die is cast; a little while since I thought, if you desired it, I ought to be your's; but if you can stoop to degrade yourself by a connexion with a friendless deserted orphan, I never will owe the obligation to any man, nor have the chance of being upbraided, that I belong to nobody. Pardon me, my good friends, the trouble I have given you, a few days hence I will hide myself for ever." She arose to leave the room. "Stop, madam, (said Mr. Weimar;)

Weimar;) since nothing can prevail on you to accept my hand, at least permit me to tell you, you have no right to dispose of yourself without my permission; you were committed to my care, doubtless by your parents; you may one day be reclaimed; I am answerable for the trust reposed in me, and with me I shall insist upon your remaining till those to whom you belong appear to claim you."

Matilda sunk back in her chair, overwhelmed with horror; he looked furious with passion; the Marquis and his lady were perplexed and chagrined, at length the former said, "Without the smallest intent of contesting your rights, Sir, I have patiently attended to what has passed between this young lady and yourself; the Marchioness and I have been scrupulously exact not to give our opinion, much less advice on the subject; but now, since she has resolutely made up her mind, you certainly have too just a sense of what is owing to yourself, to persist in addressing her; taking that for granted, and that you think it impro-

per she should become a Nun, I request it as a favor, that Miss Matilda may be permitted to spend a few months with us ; should any person appear to claim her, I trust it will be no dishonour to have her found in my protection ; and I pledge my honor she shall form no marriage or engagement under our care, but return to you as she now is." " My Lord, (returned Mr. Weimar) I must consider of this request, and she will do well to consider and repent her rash determination ; if she does, I will receive her with open arms. I trust her to your honor, and shall to-morrow wait on you with my decided opinion." With a polite, but general bow, he left the room.

The Marchioness was supporting Matilda's head upon her shoulder. " Look up, my dear girl, be composed, he is gone." " Thank heaven ! (said she) but my head is very bad, and with your leave I will lay down an hour or two." " Do so, my dear, (replied her friend ; ) and calling the servant to attend

attend her, she was conducted to her apartment.

When she left the room the Marchioness said, "Mr. Weimar's conduct appears very strange, and unbecoming a man of his years ; I know not what to think ; had he not injudiciously mentioned her birth she would certainly have accepted his hand, though I own it would have given me pain had she done so."

"For my part, (answered the Marquis) I marked him well during the whole scene ; that he is excessively fond of her, I believe, but I am not perfectly satisfied, although I know not, what part to blame of his conduct ; nevertheless she has now taken her resolution, and only force shall compel me to withdraw my protection from a friendless orphan, whose situation is really deplorable. If the circumstances he related of her birth are true, I have no doubt but one time or other a discovery will take place to her advantage ; all I wish at



present is, that she may accompany you to England." "Do you not think, (said the Marchioness) the Count De Bouville is very fond of her?" "I fear so, (replied he;) but you know Mr. Weimar's observations with respect to the obscurity of her birth are founded on truth, I would by no means encourage a dangerous intimacy between them, which might be productive of misery to both; 'tis for that reason I should wish her to leave Paris whilst the liking which I think mutual is in its infancy."

During the conversation of her generous friends, the unhappy Matilda gave herself up to extreme sorrow. If Mr. Weimar chose to exert his right over her, she saw no one to whom she could appeal for redress; but determined as she now was never to become his wife, she was sensible she had little chance of becoming the wife of any other man; to engage her benefactors in disputes and controversies with him was equally repugnant to her inclinations, and without his consent it would

would be in vain to think of accompanying her friends, as he might pursue her every where. She knew she had many obligations to him, but she could not return them in the way he was desirous of, which must make her miserable, and of course give no happiness to him. What then, (cried she, weeping) am I to do? there is no alternative but Mr. Weimar or a convent; the latter is my preferable choice, and if he persists to-morrow in exerting the authority he claims over me, I will fly to that for protection.

Having now made up her mind, she dropt asleep, but her slumbers were broken and disturbed; and in about three hours she returned to her friends, very little refreshed, but was much gratified by their peculiar tenderness and attention, and an increased respect in their manner proved they wished to restore her self-consequence, and make her at ease with herself.

This is true benevolence ; 'tis the mode or conferring favours that either obliges or wounds a feeling heart. Many people are generous, but they forget how painful it is to ask favors, and think it quite sufficient if they give, let the manner of giving be ever so ungracious, and their superiority ever so ostentatiously displayed. Not so the Marquis and his lady—they endeavoured to persuade her, they were the persons obliged by her acceptance of their little civilities, and entered into all her concerns with the affection and anxiety of her nearest relatives.

Matilda's grateful heart overflowed; speech indeed was not lent her, but her tears, her expressive looks forcibly conveyed the language she could not utter.

In the meantime Mademoiselle De Fontelle was not idle; scarce a person the Marchioness was acquainted with, but knew she had taken a girl under her protection, who had robbed and run away from her uncle,  
with

with a young handsome footman ; and during two days circulation of the story Miss Weimar was detected by her uncle in several low intrigues, which he kindly forgave, 'till quite abandoned and incorrigible, she had taken away all his gold and jewels, and came to Paris with this fellow, whom the Marchioness herself had taken into the house.

“ Ciel, (cries one, shrugging her shoulders) a pretty story indeed ; this is the discreet, the admirable Marchioness De Melfort, held up as a pattern to all the women in Paris.” “ Yes, I thought she was a wonder, (said another ; ) abundance of art, to be sure she has ; for I'll answer for it, this intrigue with a footman is not the first by many ; but, poor woman, her charms are in their wane now, so the man is a substitute for the master.” “ What, (cries a third) has the Marchioness herself an intrigue ? Lord, didn't you hear that ? why this girl is only a cover to her own amusements.” “ Well, (said a fourth) I saw both the other night at Madame De Bouville's, and I am sure they are both ugly  
enough



enough, notwithstanding the men made such a fuss about them."

'Twas thus the scandal of Mademoiselle's fabricating was increased and magnified among their generous and charitable acquaintance: like Sir Peter Teazle's wound, it was in all parts of his body, and by a variety of murderous weapons, when the poor man was unconscious of having received any himself, and could scarce obtain credit when he appeared in perfect health: so unwilling is the good-natured world to give up a story that is to the disadvantage of others. It was in vain the Countess De Bouville, her son and daughter, Madame De Nancy and her sister, attempted to stop the scandalous tales; like lightning it flew from house to house, and every one who had no character to lose, and others of suspected reputation only rejoiced to level an amiable respectable woman with themselves.

The

The Count De Bouville was distracted; he flew from a set of envious wretches to the Marquis De Melforts; when he entered the room he met the eyes of the lovely dejected Matilda, with such an expression of grief and softness in them, that it pierced his heart: she blushed, and withdrew them, with a sigh she could not suppress. The Marquis had left the room, the Marchioness was holding her young friend's hand with an affectionate tender air.

After the usual compliments he enquired particularly after Matilda's health; she could not trust her voice just then to speak, the Marchioness answered, "She is better, only a dejection on her spirits, which you must assist in removing: I was trying to persuade her to accompany me in a carriage to pay a few visits." The Count, alarmed at the intention, replied, "Paying visits might possibly be too fatiguing, but an airing would surely be of service." "Well then, (said the Marchioness, forgetful of her Lord's caution,) you shall

shall accompany us." The carriage, which was in waiting, drawing up, he gladly escorted the two ladies to it, and took his seat very quietly opposite to Matilda, who had hitherto observed a profound silence. He contrived however to draw her into a little conversation, and was charmed with her good sense and sweetness of manners. The languor that pervaded her fine features, powerfully engaged the heart, and the Count could not help thinking how happy that man must be who was destined to possess so great a treasure! This reflection caused a sudden alteration in his countenance; he grew thoughtful and uneasy, when he was disturbed in his reverie by an exclamation from the Marchioness, " Goodheavens ! what insolence." " What's the matter, madam?" " Bless me, didn't you observe the two carriages that past, in one was Madame Remini and her two daughters, in the other Madame Le Brun, her niece, and two others of my acquaintance. As the carriage past, I bowed and kissed my hand; they one and all returned a slight bow,  
and

and laughed in each other's faces : upon my word I never saw such rudeness." The Count who could too well account for this behaviour, was however very much vexed. " Dear madam (said he) such impertinent women are scarce worth your notice, and only deserving contempt." " That's true, Count, (replied she) and henceforth I shall treat them as they deserve."

As neither of the parties were in high spirits, their airing was not a long one, and they returned to the house as the Marquis entered it.

After they were seated the Marchioness was expressing her wishes to be in England. " Does Miss Weimar accompany you ? (asked the Count.) " I hope so, (replied the Marchioness.) The Marquis giving the Count a glance, they retired to the library, where the conversation of the morning, between Mr. Weimar and Matilda, was repeated. The Count felt indignation, pity,  
and



and resentment; he was delighted with Matilda's spirit, yet most sincerely felt for her unhappy situation. "Good God, my dear Marquis, what is to be done for this amiable girl?" "I hope, (he replied) we shall prevail on him to leave her with us,—to-morrow will determine; but take it how he will, I have this day made several persons acquainted with his being the guardian of Matilda, and his offers of marriage in my presence: the circumstance of a young lady's flying from her guardian is nothing extraordinary, and will, I hope, do away the scandal that has been propagated at her expence." "You are very good, (returned the Count) and I am sure she merits the esteem of all the world." He took his leave, under such a contrariety of sentiments, and so much real concern for the unfortunate Matilda, that when he returned to his sister she was quite alarmed, and asked a thousand questions relative to her friend. When he had explained every thing, the gentle Adelaide felt equal concern, and lamented that her troubles were  
of

of a kind that placed it out of the power of their friendship to afford her any consolation or relief.

Whilst they were expressing mutual regret Mademoiselle De Fontelle was announced; she was received with a coldness that would have mortified any other person, but putting on a gay air, "Ah! Count, so soon returned from your party; I did not expect to find you here." "Perhaps, madam, had I known your intended visit, I might have been elsewhere." "Very polite, upon my word, (said she, colouring deeply;) your brother, my dear Bouville, has acquired the English roughness of manners, by his tour to that country." "I hope, madam, (replied he, significantly) I have acquired the sincerity of that nation, at least, to speak as I think; and as a proof of it, were you not my sister's guest, I should be free enough to say, I so much detest the fabricators of scandal, that I heartily rejoice when they are mortified by being obliged to hear the object of their envy  
is

is as much superior to them in every amiable quality of the mind, as she is in the beauty of her person, and that it will be her own fault only if she is not established in a more brilliant situation than her enemies can boast of."

With these words he left the room, with a look of scorn she could not support, but burst into tears. " You brother has cruelly insulted me, (said she.) " I am sorry for it, and for the occasion, (answered Mademoiselle De Bouville;) but indeed you have been too unguarded in your reports to the disadvantage of Miss Weimar." " Name her not, (cried she) I hate her." " That may be, (returned the other) nevertheless I hold it my duty to do her justice." She then briefly mentioned Mr. Weimar was only her guardian, and that he was come after her to solicit her hand, the only thing for which she left him. His offers before the Marquis and his lady, and the very great justice he did her character. The malicious girl was ready to burst

burst with spleen, but carried it off with an air. " Upon my word, (said she) Mr. Weimar was himself the person who first mentioned the affair to her disadvantage; and I suppose there is some point to carry, or some mystery in an affair where there are such contradictions, which I do not comprehend, and which, I dare say, will deceive nobody, though I would venture to swear, hardly any person will concern themselves about the Marchioness's little protégée, or whether the German is uncle or not to one whom no body knows." She arose, and desiring her respects to her *very polite* brother, flounced out of the room.

Neither her resentment nor absence was a subject of regret to Adelaide, who only visited her in compliance with the fashion of the times, which is to go every where with the rest of the world, and assist in forming a crowd, without knowing or caring for three-fourths of the company.

Mean-



Meantime the remainder of the day was spent at the Marquis's in the most affectionate endeavours to console Matilda, and the warmest assurances of love and attention to her interests. They all anxiously expected the return of Mr. Weimar next morning, as the crisis on which her future destiny appeared to depend.

At the appointed hour Mr. Weimar sent in his name ; her friends had persuaded Matilda to receive him alone, and send for them when she thought it necessary. She had tried all the morning to reconcile herself to his displeasure, but she was resolved to persevere in the resolution she had formed of retiring to a convent, if he made it necessary.

He entered the room with an air of kindness and complacency, took her hand and kissed it, " Let me flatter myself, dearest Matilda, (said he) that you are in better health and disposition than when I left you yesterday. I have passed many uneasy hours lately,

lately, indeed I may say truly, from the day you was committed to my care, every hour of my life has been spent in anxiety on your account." "Do not, Sir, (said she) for heaven's sake, do not crush me with the weight of obligations I owe you: a poor forlorn being, without family or friends, as you have justly told me, is entitled to no one's consideration; I am therefore beyond all possibility of return at present; indebted to you for every thing, for the life I enjoy, hard is the task upon me to refuse any thing you request, but as this meeting is to decide once for all, pardon me if I say I cannot marry you, but this deference I owe to your fatherly care of me, I solemnly declare, that unless the authors of my being claim my first reverence, I never will encourage marry man without your permission; this, Sir, is all I can, or ever will promise in your favour." "Ungrateful girl! (cried he, raising his voice) and is this all, this all you owe to a man who preserved your life, and bestowed his time and fortune to make you what you are?" "Oh! that I had

I had died, (cried Matilda, in an agony) rather than to live and be thus upbraided for favours I never can return; but my mind tells me you will one day be repaid for all;—yes, I have a pre-sentiment I am no base-born unworthy offspring; one day, Sir, I may yet have the power to prove my sense of the obligations you reproach me with, and it will be the happiest moment of my life.” She had spoken with such vehemence as precluded interruption; he was surprised; “ You are warm, Matilda, (said he, very calmly.) “ I cannot help it, Sir, you have made me desperate; I will seek peace and quietness in a convent. You will not permit me to accompany the Marchioness, (said she, softening, and tears running down her cheeks) and I think I owe you that respect not to go without your leave; therefore I have no other asylum but a convent to hope for.” “ Have I not a house, Matilda?” “ Yes, Sir; I might have resided in my uncle’s house, but I cannot, with propriety, in your’s, when I have no such claim to boast of.”

of." She arose and rang the bell; " Desire the Marquis and his lady to favour me with their company." When the servant retired, " You are then determined, madam?" " I am, Sir." " Then so am I, and you may take the consequence."

\* Her friends now entered; after they were seated Matilda spoke, " I took the liberty to request your presence, that you might be witness to my declaration for the last time, That I never will be the wife of Mr. Weimar, nor without his consent, unless commanded by my parents, (alas! how unlikely at present that hope) never to marry any other man. It would be the joy of my heart to have been permitted to accept the honor of the protection you have offered me, but as I fear that cannot be, I will retire into a convent, 'tis the only place of refuge for a poor unfortunate, friendless being, without family, friends, or even a name." She wept aloud, pronouncing those last words. The Marchioness sympathized with her, and addressing Mr. Weimar,

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“ Come, Sir, (said she) let me prevail on you to accede to our request, we ask it as a favor; permit Miss Matilda to be in our care for six months; I engage my honor she shall return by that time free from every engagement.” He made no answer.

“ Shall I entreat the favor of a few words in private, Sir, (said the Marquis.) They arose and left the room. Within a short time they returned. Mr. Weimar, advancing to Matilda, “ I have consented to oblige you, too ungrateful girl; I permit you to remain with the Marchioness, but conditionally, that you write me constantly every occurrence, nor presume to enter into any engagement without my acquiescence.” “ To these conditions, (cried she, her eyes sparkling with joy) I most cheerfully subscribe. He looked full of resentment at her, but taking a polite leave, declined an invitation to stay dinner, and hastily withdrew.

The

The moment he left the room Matilda arose, and throwing her arms round the Marchioness, her grateful heart overflowing into tears, "Oh! my dearest, my generous protectress, how shall I ever return your goodness?" "By loving me, my precious girl, as affectionately as I do you, (answered she, embracing her.) Observing the Marquis seemed musing, "May I ask, my Lord, what occupies your thoughts?" "Yes, (replied he;) it is fit you should know; to be plain then, I don't like Mr. Weimar; I suspect he means to deceive us." Good God, (cried Matilda, alarmed) how is that possible?" "Be it as it may, (answered the Marquis) we will guard against any sinister design; let our young friend retire this night to some place of safety." "You do not surely apprehend he will apply for a *lettre de-cachet*? (said the Marchioness.) "I should not be surprised at it, (returned he.) "Then (said she) we will set off instantly on our journey; Louison and Antoine can attend us; Marianne shall take care of all our baggage here, and

follow us, with Pierre, in a day or two, or come with you." " 'Tis a hasty, and rather an inconvenient scheme, (said he) but I have no other to offer at present." " O, what trouble I occasion to my friends," (cried Matilda.) " Go to your apartment, set about packing, my dear girl; we must take a few necessaries with us, and set off immediately after dinner." She obeyed. The Marquis set about the arrangements for their journey, and promised to follow in four or five days.

Poor Joseph and Albert deplored their fate, in being too old to accompany the ladies, and were the only domestics left in the house, who knew to what place they were going.

Every thing being settled in a few hours, it was given out in the family, they were going into the country for a short time; even Marianne and Pierre knew no more for the present; and the ladies, attended by Louison  
and

and Antoine, set off, with all expedition: fortunately, Antoine had been in England once before, with a former master; he was therefore acquainted with the roads and accommodations, and consequently extremely useful.

The Marquis found the following day he had been right in his conjectures. Two men came to his hotel, armed with authority, to demand a lady commonly known by the name of Matilda Weimar, with a description of her person, then under the protection of the Marquis De Melfort. The Marquis was not at home; the men were informed the young lady was gone, with their mistress, into the country. They searched the house, and being disappointed, waited till the Marquis returned; he gave them the same information, and drew up a paper, signifying, that having taken the young lady under his protection, by the consent of Mr. Weimar, who called himself her guardian, she had accom-



panied the Marchioness on a visit to some friends; that he pledged his honor for her safety, also to answer any charges that could be brought against her. With this declaration the men departed and returned no more; but a person was observed to watch the house for some days after.

The Marquis made no secret to the Bouville family of the past transactions, and though they felt great regret for the loss of their friends, they acknowledged the event had justified their prudence in the steps they had taken.

The Count felt more than he dared express, yet tried to subdue his feelings, from a consciousness of their impropriety to be indulged. His sister was to be married the following week to Monsieur De Clermont, and her establishment engrossed much of his time and attention.

The

The Marquis very soon arranged all his affairs, and within five days after the ladies left Paris, he followed them.

The Marchioness and her friend pursued their route, arrived at Calais, and crossed over to Dover, without meeting a single accident ; here they determined to rest, and wait for the Marquis. They were exceedingly fatigued with the expedition they had used, and were glad to sit down comfortably.

The Marchioness understood the English language perfectly well, and spoke enough to make herself comprehended in common matters ; Antoine did the same, but as to Matilda and Louison, they knew not a single word 'till the Marchioness taught them to name a few necessary articles, and write down common words.

Much sooner than they expected, they had the pleasure of embracing the Marquis, and then learned the danger Matilda had escaped,

and the duplicity of Mr. Weimar. She shuddered to think how near she had been to misery, and her affection and gratitude to the worthy pair, who protected her, was proportionably increased.

The following morning they left Dover, and by easy journies arrived at the Royal Hotel in Jermyn-street. A card was instantly sent off to Harley-street. The messenger returned, with a line only, from the Countess, that they should follow the bearer with all speed, and within ten minutes after the coach drew up. The Marquis hastened down to receive and conduct the ladies. The Countess was almost breathless with joy; she flew up stairs, and in a moment was in her sister's arms. Their mutual joy, their tears of affection and transport excited sympathy in every one. The Countess, recovering, led her sister to Mrs. Courtney, "The two dearest friends I have on earth, (said she) love each other for my sake now, you have congenial hearts." She then warmly embraced Matilda. "This is the first day of  
my

my life, (cried she, putting her hand to her heart;) I have all that I love in the world about me, at least, all that I know, (added she, with a suppressed sigh.)

Matilda, whose grateful heart expanded with delight, to see all her friends happy, expressed her feelings with such a warmth of satisfaction as engaged all their affections. She was introduced also to Mrs. Courtney: and when the first tumults of joy were over, the Countess, taking that lady's hand, said, "Behold, my dear sister and brother, the preserver of Victoria's life; to her goodness I am indebted for all the happiness I now enjoy, a vast debt of gratitude, never to be repaid." "You neither do me nor yourself justice, (answered Mrs. Courtney;) if you do not think I am a thousand times overpaid for any little services, I have been so happy to render you, by the pleasure of your company, and the honor you have procured me, of knowing your respectable friends." They all gratefully bowed to this compliment, and

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then



then began to talk of their future residence. The Marquis wished to have a ready furnished house, in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Courtney. She contended for the pleasure of accommodating them in hers; but this, for several reasons, they declined; and after a long and friendly contest it was decided, a house should be procured for them in her neighbourhood, but that they should spend every other week at Mrs. Courtney's villa, and until a habitation was fixed on they would remain at the hotel, where they all supped together that evening.

“ I know, (said the Countess) you must all be very anxious to understand by what means I obtained my present happy situation, and I am equally curious to know how my dear Miss Weimar conducted herself from the time we last met; but we will suspend curiosity for the present, nor cloud our happy meeting with a recital of painful events.”

“ You are right, my dear Countess, (said Mrs. Courtney;) we are now all happily met,  
and

and 'tis of little consequence by what means it came about at present."

They passed a most delightful evening, and parted with reluctance, after engaging to spend the following day in Harley-street, and Mrs. Courtney promising to search the neighbourhood for a house to accommodate them.

"What a charming woman is Mrs. Courtney," (said the Marchioness.) "Ah! (cried Matilda) I wish I understood English I should like to speak to that lady in her own language." "You shall learn it, my love, when we are settled; but as the lady speaks French remarkably well, you have no cause for regret."

They retired to rest, and the following morning had some trade's people with them, who are always on the watch to attend foreigners at the hotels. They purchased a few trifles, but chose to have Mrs. Courtney's

judgment before they bought any thing of consequence.

The Marquis, who had letters of credit on the house of Sir Thomas Herries, attended by the master of the hotel, went out to get cash, whilst the ladies attended to the business of the toilet, as they had engaged to be with their friends at a very early hour.

Soon after his return they drove to Harley-street, and were received with that affectionate cordiality, a thousand times more desirable than distant civility and respect: they met like old friends, with congenial minds, to enjoy the pleasures of society. Mrs. Courtney told them, she hoped she had already succeeded in her endeavours to procure a residence for them; "and, fortunately, (said she) only three doors from hence; if you are inclined, we can now look at it." The proposal was accepted. The house and furniture, which had been all new within the twelvemonth, and belonged to Lord G——, who found it convenient to go  
abroad

abroad for his health ; was now to be let for a year certain, at 400l. per annum. They were extremely well pleased with the house, and readily agreed to the terms. Within two or three days it would be ready for their reception.

This being settled, they returned in high spirits, and spent a most delightful day in a quiet family party.

The next day was appropriated to shopping and excursions round the town ; and indeed, except sleeping hours, they passed their time solely together ; Mrs. Courtney having shut her doors to all company, 'till they were settled in their new abode : for the same reason the Marquis deferred sending all his letters of recommendation, or waiting on the French Ambassador.

The fourth day after their arrival in England they took possession of their house ; and having been fortunate enough to obtain a respectable



spectable woman, who was perfectly conversant in the French language, as housekeeper, they agreed to spend the following week in the country, previous to their being publicly announced in town.

Nothing particular occurred until their arrival at Bellvue, Mrs. Courtney's little paradise: they were quite delighted with its situation, and charmed with its polite and friendly owner. The second morning after their residence here, the Countess entered the Marchioness's dressing-room, (Matilda was with her;) "Mrs. Courtney has just got two or three neighbours with her; my presence not being necessary, I have seized the opportunity, to make our respective communications: I am sensible you must be very curious, but I wish to hear my dear Miss Weimar's story taken up from the visit she promised me, and I suppose intended paying me." Matilda very readily gave an account of every event at the castle. The Countess shuddered, and heaved a sigh to the fate of poor Margarite, but did not interrupt 'till she  
came

came to the letter received from Joseph, of the fire in the castle, Bertha's miserable fate and his escape. "Good heavens! (cried she) of what atrocious wickedness is that man capable! Poor wretch, what a long account has he one day to make—God grant him repentance!" Matilda proceeded, and related every circumstance until their safe arrival in London. The Countess embraced the lovely girl, who had betrayed a sense of mortification in recounting the particulars of her birth. "I thank, my beloved sister (said she) for the attention she paid to my request, and I am persuaded your charming society has amply recompensed her for the favor she did me." "You judge right, my dear Victoria; I am indeed the obliged person: but come, pray begin your narration, and take it up from the time you married that brute whose name you bear——" "But which I do not assume here (answered the Countess;) I pass for a Madame Le Roche, and as we neither go to court nor attend any public galas, I have never been particularly introduced,

duced, and am known among my dear Mrs. Courtney's friends, as a widow of some fashion, but small fortune, on a visit to her, and not very desirous of much company; therefore you must get your lesson by heart against we return to town. Now, as to your request, you may possibly think I am too observant of my word toward an inhuman monster, when I declare that the sacred vows he drew from me still bind me to secrecy, as to what occasioned my being shut up in the Castle, and permitting the general belief of my death." "Good God! sister, (cried the Marchioness) vows forced upon you, under such circumstances, have no power to bind; and you have sufficiently proved your truth and honour, by preserving them so many years from your dearest friends;—I am sure our confessor will absolve you." "May be so, (replied Madame Le Roche) and on our return to town I will consult him, till when I shall take up my story from the day Matilda left me. "Charmed that I was likely to procure an asylum for her, as I doubted not of your acceding to my request,

request, I retired to bed at an early hour, but could not sleep; about midnight I thought I heard an uncommon noise at the outward doors; I listened, and, convinced it was not fancy, I called on *Margarite*; the noise had alarmed her, she ran to me in the same instant that we heard the door in the kitchen burst open, and the Count appeared with an ill-looking fellow. I was out of bed, and had thrown on a wrapping gown about me; I trembled from head to foot; he came up to me furiously; "Wretch, (cried he) you have broken your oath with me, and therefore mine is no longer binding—prepare to die." Despair had given me courage—I was no longer the poor weak creature he had entangled some years before; my spirits returned, "Strike, barbarian, and complete your crimes, I fear not death, it will free me from all the miseries you have heaped upon me; but I will not suffer under imputed guilt—I have broke no vows, I have kept the fatal oath you extorted from me in the hour of terror." "How dare you persist in falsehoods; (cried he;)



he;) you have had a woman here—you see and converse with Joseph daily; dare you deny those charges?” “I do not (answered I) but still I have preserved my faith; the woman came here by accident, unawed by the terrors Joseph I endeavoured to inspire, but she knew not who I was, nor any thing relative to my situation, and goes from hence in a few days: as to Joseph, the poor fellow, when he brings my provisions, enters into a little chat with Margarite, and sometimes I speak to him, and where is the mighty crime? You must know your diabolical secret is too well kept, or I need not be here in your power.” He paused a few minutes, then withdrew to the window, and spoke to the man in a low tone; they came again towards me, and I expected instant death, but they locked the doors, and stopping the mouth of poor Margarite, dragged her out of the room, still locking the door after them. The apprehensions I was under for that poor creature, overcame the courage I assumed, and I swooned; how long I was deprived of my senses,

ferences, I know not, but I recovered by cold water they threw in my face. "O, what have you done with my poor nurse?" "She is safe from betraying secrets, (replied he :) come, madam, put on your clothes, and I shall bestow you safely too." "If you design my death, (said I) let me die here." "Do as I command, (cried he, furiously) or I shall carry you off as you are." I threw on my clothes, as well as my terror would permit; meantime he broke the locks of my cabinet, although he could have had the keys, took out what valuables belonged to me; and then taking me between them, they led me through a long subterraneous passage, till we came out through a thicket to the skirts of the wood; it was but faint star light; I saw two horses fastened; I was immediately put upon one, though I made some resistance, expecting they intended carrying me into the thick part of the wood, and murder me there,—and I still think it was so designed. The man held me fast; we passed a small cottage, but all was quiet, and soon after entered

tered another part of the wood, when suddenly the Count's horse fell and threw him over his head; he lay motionless; the man who held me rode up to him; he did not move. "I must see what hurt he has, (cried he;) and jumping off, left me on the horse; at the same instant I gave him a kick, and the animal set off full speed through the wood. I must inevitably have been killed, had it pursued its way through the thickets, but providentially he made towards the road, and being tired, slackened his pace. Unable any longer to support the fatigue; my head giddy, and dreadfully galled with the saddle, I slipped off on a small hillock, on one side, and lay quite exhausted, expecting every moment to be overtaken and murdered. I had been there but a few minutes before a carriage appeared, with two or three horsemen; I uttered a cry; the carriage stopt—a servant came up, "Who are you—what is the matter?" (said he.) I replied, feebly, "An unfortunate woman, escaped from being murdered, for God sake save me." The

The man went to the carriage, it drew up, the door was opened, and I was put in. The sudden joy added to the terror and fatigue I had gone through overpowered my senses, and I fainted; I was soon restored by the help of the lady's salts; I was able to look up, by my side sat the charming Mrs. Courtney, supporting me; opposite was a middle aged gentleman, and a young one about seventeen or eighteen; I tried to speak, and kissed her hand. "Be composed, dear lady, (said she) your spirits are already too much exhausted; (seeing me look with terror then on one side and then another) you fear being pursued, (she continued;) we shall stop very soon, but as the day appears the blinds shall be drawn up." This was accordingly done: 'tis needless to tell you our conversation. My heart expanded with gratitude to heaven for my deliverance. I was unable to give a satisfactory account of myself, only so far as related to my escape from the wood; I mentioned you, my sister, and your intended journey to England, and the uncertainty how soon you might depart,



depart, and therefore my wishes to join you. Mrs. Courtney told me she was immediately going there, and as I was apprehensive of being known, it would be much better to accompany her, and write my sister from England. Before I could reply to this obliging proposal, we stopt at the post-house, changed horses, and pursued our journey with rapidity 'till about noon, when we drew up to a very fine old castle, which I found belonged to a friend of theirs, and where they proposed passing the night. I was shocked at my appearance; my clothes thrown on in a hurry, discomposed by the flight of the horse, and not one article about me calculated for travelling. My amiable preserver requested I would make myself easy; "Fortunately, (said she) we are nearly of a size; I have another habit in my trunk, with which I can accommodate you, and my woman will soon make your appearance decent, and reconcile your feelings, which I see are much oppressed." The moment we alighted, "My friend has been ill, (said she) and is in dishabille,  
bille,

bille, will you shew her an apartment, that she may alter her dress?" The lady's woman instantly attended me to an elegant room, whilst Mrs. Courtney's got the trunk opened and procured me necessaries. I was soonequipped; my charming friend came to conduct me to the company; I was received with kindness and attention by an elderly gentleman and lady, the owners of the castle, and passed a comfortable night. The next day we pursued our journey, though much pressed to stay, and arrived at Lausanne. I found the gentleman with us was uncle to Mrs. Courtney, and was come over to place his son at Lausanne, to finish his education; but having formerly resided some years in Switzerland, he had been paying a few visits to his friends, and was returning from one of them, when I was so fortunate to obtain their protection. We stayed a week at Lausanne. I kept very close in my apartment, in a constant dread of being discovered; I was heartily rejoiced when we pursued our journey, much more so when we arrived in England.

Mrs.

Mrs. Courtney's kindness cannot be described; she treats me like her dearest sister, and her uncle, who lives not far from us in Cavendish-square, appears to make no difference between us; he is a nobleman, a widower, about forty; has an only son, and is one of the most amiable men I ever knew. Judge how much happiness is now my lot with such friends, and blest with the company of my dearest relations. Sometimes, (continued she) I thought it possible the Count might have been killed by his fall; at other times, that he might be only senseless; in short, I had a hundred conjectures about him, but 'tis plain he was not much hurt, since he could return to the Castle and contrive more mischief. Now, in this land of liberty should he ever appear to persecute me again, I shall make no scruple to open the whole scenes of wickedness he has been guilty of;—there is one corroding care that hangs about my heart, but of that hereafter." She arose in visible emotion, "Come let us take a ram-  
ble

ble in the garden after my tedious narrative.” They accompanied her.

I think, my dear sister, (said the Marquis) ’tis a justice you owe yourself and friends to institute a process against this monster.” “ I shall think of it, (said she) but I have many objections ; at present let us drop the subject.” They acquiesced.

Mrs. Courtney joined them in the garden ; “ Lord bless me ! (said she, laughing) how eager and persevering is curiosity ; here I have had three ladies dying to see the French family with me ; asking ten thousand questions about their dress and their persons, their fashions, and many other matters equally important. They made a most tedious visit, and as I discovered the motive, I was at length obliged to inform them my Parisian friends saw no company until they had been introduced in town : this effectually did the business,—they rose all together, made their



congeés, and put an end to their tiresome enquiries."

A week was spent at Bellvue, in all the delights of love and friendship, in little excursions round the neighbourhood, and in viewing the delightful prospects the Surry hills afforded them.

Persons of good sense, like the present party were never at a loss for rational amusement when at home, and on their return to the metropolis they separated with reluctance, though so near to each other.

Two days after their arrival the Marquis received a letter from the Count De Bouville, informing him of his sister's marriage, and that three days subsequent to an event which had given them so much joy, they had been exceeding'y alarmed by the sudden illness of their respectable mother, who continued in a dangerous way, which was the reason Madame De Clermont had not written to Matilda, whose

whose health they were extremely anxious to hear of: he further said, he had made some secret enquires about Mr. Weimar, and learnt, that after remaining in Paris near a week, he had disappeared, but whether returned to Germany or not, they could not tell; that great prejudice was still entertained against Matilda, in consequence of which their family had declined seeing Madame Le Brun and her envious niece.

The Marquis communicated this letter to his friends, but as Matilda was ignorant of the scandal circulated at her expence, what related to Mademoiselle De Fontelle was omitted. She shuddered at the name of Mr. Weimar, and dreaded lest he might have pursued her to England. But this, the Marchioness said) was by no means to be apprehended, as it could answer no purpose.

The Marquis and his lady now prepared for their presentation at court, and had sent

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their friend's introductory letters to several persons of fashion.

On Thursday they were at the drawing room with the French Ambassador, and returned highly gratified with the politeness and affability of the king and queen, and equally charmed with the princesses. The following day they received abundance of visits from the nobility, both English and foreign, and very readily coincided with the sentiments of the Count De Bouville, as to the attention and charms of the English ladies.

They were now obliged to be in public, and both pay and receive a number of visits, consequently Matilda spent most of her time with Madame le Roche and Mrs. Courtney; both ladies were extremely fond of her; they sometimes accompanied her to the play, and as she studied the language with care, she hoped in time to have her ears equally gratified with her eyes.

Lord

Lord Delby, Mrs. Courtney's uncle, was always of their parties, and his great partiality and admiration of Madame Le Roche was evident to the whole family; she was sometimes rallied about it; the subject gave her pain. "Compassion is the only claim I can have to his Lordship's notice, (said she, one day;) do not, my dear friends, suggest an idea which would make me very miserable." "I see not, (answered the Marquis) why you are to give up every pleasure in life, and compel yourself to refuse the blessings of love and friendship, through any dread of a villain who deserves the severest punishments; but I will send another person to talk with you to-morrow, for I really will not permit you to live in a situation so unworthy of yourself and friends."

The following day Doctor Demouriez, the Ambassador's Chaplain, called at Mrs. Courtney's, and had above three hours conversation with her. He returned to the Marquis. "I have heard a tale of horror,



(said he;) and having subdued all your sister's scruples respecting her compulsory vows, she has confessed every thing to me, and will this evening, she says, repeat each circumstance to you, after which we must consult what steps will be necessary to pursue."

They all anxiously expected the hour of meeting in the evening; and after they had dined, and retired to the drawing-room, the Marchioness eagerly claimed her sister's promise. "I will obey you, my dear sister, though you little think what it costs me to make such a painful relation.

"You well know the reluctance with which I married the Count, my subsequent illness and recovery. When my health was restored I began seriously to consider my situation, and the sacrament I had vowed to observe: I determined to do my duty; and if I could not love the Count, at least, to esteem and oblige him. I was then a stranger  
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ger to his real disposition; I thought him severe and stern, but I soon found he was gloomy, suspicious, and revengeful. Whilst my father lived he observed some little decency towards me, but after his death, and you had quitted Vienna, my sufferings, from his causeless ill-humour, cannot be described. I was now far advanced in my pregnancy, an event I looked forward to as the end of all my troubles; for I had lost my spirits, my strength, and appetite. One day he went to Vienna, he returned at night in a most horrid temper. "Prepare yourself, (said he) for a journey to Switzerland, the day after to-morrow." "Good God, to Switzerland, in my situation?" "Yes, (he replied;) you can bear the journey very well, and Margaritha, who is to be your nurse, shall attend you." "Indeed I am very unable to travel so far," (said I.) "I know better (he replied;) but the reasons you have for declining, madam, make me the more anxious for it." "Well, Sir, I have no more to say, but to obey you." "You

do well, madam; for any thing you could urge will have no effect upon me." I was silent; I withdrew, and passed a wretched night. The next day poor Margarite and I were employed in packing our clothes and other necessaries, and the following day, soon as it was light, we set off on our journey. We at length arrived at the old Castle which Matilda has described to you. My blood chilled when I entered the gates. I was conducted to the right hand wing, which had then a door into the court, though it was afterwards bricked up. The furniture was handsome, but antique even then. "This, madam, is your apartment, and I think the Chevalier will have good luck to obtain entrance here." "Chevalier! what Chevalier, (repeated I?) "Your Chevalier, madam; don't suppose I was ignorant of his return to Vienna, and sauntering about my grounds." "I don't know, Sir, what you mean; there is no Chevalier belongs to me, nor do I know of any man sauntering, as you call it, in your grounds. My heart justifies me, that ever  
since

since I became your wife, I have strictly fulfilled the duties of that situation." "Your conscience, madam, is mighty convenient to your wishes, I don't doubt; but I am not to be duped by either. This is your habitation; the other parts of the house are not so good, but with them you need have no communications; they are occupied by the gardener." My bed room was the horrid one where Miss Weimar saw poor Margarite murdered, and very gloomy it was then, though without iron bars. I wept almost incessantly; my nurse was still more miserable, but she had been brought up from a child in the Count's family, and was obsequious to his will.

I had been in the Castle about three weeks, when, one evening, as I was sitting in my room, at the close of the day I heard a little noise at the window. I was startled, but recovering myself, I took a chair and got upon the window seat; I saw the figure of a man, I shrunk down; again the window rattled, I recovered and looked up; presently I distinctly

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ly perceived a man, who, with a diamond, was cutting a small strip out of a pane of glass; he accomplished his work, thrust a letter in, and disappeared behind the battlements in a moment; I secured the letter, with a beating heart, and on opening it, found it came from the Chevalier De Montreville. I was surprised and agitated; I perused this fatal letter; it was filled with the tenderest expressions of regret at my unhappy fate. His own misery he could have borne, he said, had I been happy; but to see the woman he adored treated so unworthily, was more pain than he had philosophy to support; he entreated I would write a few lines, to tell him in what manner my husband behaved to me, and if there was a possibility of his doing me either service or pleasure. I shed floods of tears over this epistle: I found, though I had suppressed, I had not subdued my affection for him; yet what would it avail to encourage a correspondence I felt was improper: I hesitated,—I considered for some time whether I should write or not; at length I took  
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up my pen. I acknowledged myself obliged for the interest he took in my happiness, but at the same time assured him any attentions of his never could do me service ; on the contrary, I had reason to believe the Marquis was very jealous of him, and that possibly all his motions might be watched ; I therefore besought him to return to Vienna, and leave me to my destiny. The following day, nearly at the same hour, I heard the noise at the window repeated ; trembling for fear of interruption, I hastily got up, and slid my answer through, resolved at the same time to run no such risques, nor receive any more letters,—happy had it been could I have kept my resolution. The next evening I did not go to my room till accompanied by Margarine : I trembled every moment, lest the signal should be repeated, but I heard nothing. The next day I was peevish and dissatisfied ; the Count gloomy and sullen. After dinner, as usual, he went out among the people he had at work in the wood : involuntarily I hastened to my apartment ; I will own

the truth, I wished, though I dreaded hearing the signal. Towards the close of the day the sounds at the window were repeated: scarce knowing what I did, I got on the window-seat, and secured the letter: fancying I heard footsteps coming up stairs, I too hastily stepped back on the chair, which gave way, and I came with violence to the ground; at the same instant my door opened: I had received a dreadful blow on the side of my head, though it did not altogether deprive me of life, yet I was unable to speak. The Count ran to me, he snatched the fatal paper from my hand, and then rang for assistance; Margarite came up. With his help I was placed on the bed; she bathed my head, gave me drops and water, and I was soon restored to sense and misery. He ordered the nurse out of the room, and then coming up to me, "Wretch! (cried he, furiously) behold a proof of thy guilt and falsehood: I could sacrifice thee to my vengeance, but I will have more exquisite satisfaction, and complete revenge, such as shall strike thee  
with

with remorse and endless sorrow." I besought him to hear me; I repeated what I have told you, and added it was the last I ever intended to receive. He smiled with disdain, " Doubtless it was, and I take upon me to say it will be the last you shall ever receive from him." He never left me the whole evening, but used every cruel malicious expression it was possible to conceive. I continued very ill and agitated that night and great part of the day. In the afternoon my persecutor left me, but Margerite remained; I got up, and was under the most dreadful apprehensions of what might happen; my eyes were continually turned to the window; I suffered the most agonizing terrors, when in a moment they were realized beyond whatever I could conceive of horror. A violent noise was heard on the stairs, like persons struggling, and in a moment the door was burst open; the Count and his man appeared, dragging in the Chevalier, with his mouth bound, his hands tied, and every mark of cruel treatment; I screamed, and clasped my hands



hands, but could not speak; he made several desperate efforts to free himself—alas! to little purpose. Let me hasten over the dreadful catastrophe. “Now, (said the cruel Count) you have your minion where you wished him to be, in your bed-chamber, nor shall he ever quit it alive.” I tried to speak, I threw myself on my knees, Spare, O spare! was all I could say, and fell senseless, but I was soon recovered by the officious Margarine, to still greater horror. “We have waited your recovery (said the barbarian;) I would not deprive you of so great a pleasure as seeing your lover’s last breath expire for you.” He was then dragged into the closet opposite to where I sat, and immediately repeated stabs were given with a short dagger, by the Count, through several parts of his body; his blood flowed in torrents, and with groans he fell on his face and expired. Great God! (cried she) here the scene never will be absent from my remembrance. I sat like one petrified; I neither spoke, shrieked, or groaned, but with  
my

my eyes fixed on the closet I appeared insensible to every thing. The inhuman Count was not satisfied ; he came and dragged me to the closet, and seated me by the side of the body, the blood flowing round me. “ Now, (said he) clasp your beloved Chevalier—now despise the old and cross-looking Count, (words I had once said in his hearing, long before I was married) and now enjoy the company of him for whom you despised your husband.” Saying this, he ordered Margarine and Peter to leave the room ; and finding I was still unable to speak or move, he pushed me farther into the closet, locked the door and left me. How long I continued in this state, I know not ; I believe I swooned, for it was day-light when I found myself on the floor, my clothes covered with blood, and the unhappy murdered Chevalier dead before me. ’Tis impossible to describe the horror of that moment ; I found myself seized with violent pains ; I began to think the monster had poisoned me—the idea gave me pleasure, and I endeavoured to bear my pangs without a groan ;

groan; nature however asserted its claims; I became so very ill, I could be silent no longer, I groaned, I cried aloud. Presently the door was unlocked,—the Count and Margarite appeared; they saw me in agonies; “I am dying, barbarian; you will be satisfied, you have murdered a worthy man who never injured you—you have killed an innocent wife.” I could say no more. Margarite cried out, “My Lord, my dear mistress is in labour, for God’s sake assist her to her apartment.” He seemed to hesitate, but she urging her request, between them I was conveyed to the bed, and without any other assistance than her’s delivered of a boy. When a little recovered, the Count entered the room, Peter with him. “I do not design to destroy you; no, you may live a life of horror, but dead to all the world; yet your infant shall be sacrificed.” I screamed,—I cried for mercy to my child and instant death to me. He paused and I expected the welcome stroke at last; “On one condition your child may live.” “Oh! name it, (I said;) any conditions.” “Remember

member what you say : you shall join with these two persons, in taking a solemn oath, with the sacrament, that without my permission, you will never reveal the transactions of this night and day—never mention the Chevalier's name, nor ever presume to contradict the report I shall make of your death to the world." I shuddered, but alas ! there was no alternative ; he fetched a prayer-book, and making the two poor creatures kneel, we all joined in the solemn oath, and received the sacrament from his polluted hands. Methinks at this moment I tremble at the impiety of that horrid wretch. My child was delivered to me ; Peter was ordered to assist Margarite in making a fire and getting necessaries for me. How I survived such horrors is astonishing ! The curtains were drawn, and that night the body was removed, but where it was carried to, heaven only knows, for Margarite never was informed. A coffin and every necessary for a funeral was bespoke and brought home. It was given out I had died in child-bed, and therefore in decency  
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my own women only could attend me. A figure or bundle, wrapt in a sheet, was placed in the coffin (Margarite used to think it was the Chevalier's body) and the whole ceremony took place without any one's presuming to doubt the truth. Judge what must have been my feelings, and what an excellent constitution I must have had, to bear such dreadful scenes without dying of distraction. In a few days I was removed to another room, and, as I heard, the fatal closet was cleaned out by Peter; the rooms locked up, and orders given no one should enter them. The Count never appeared before me until I was up, and able to walk about the room; one morning he entered, just as I had done breakfast. I forgot to tell you I had no sustenance for my poor babe, consequently it was brought up by hand. The dear infant was laying on my lap; I started with surprise and terror. "Come, madam, (said he, with a look that made me tremble) come and view your former apartment." "Good God! (I cried) why must I return there?" "'Tis my  
my

my pleasure," (answered he;) then bidding Margarite take the child, he ordered me to follow him. I tottered across the gallery, and on entering the room saw the windows barricaded with iron bars, the pictures and toilet taken away, and the whole appearance gloomy to excess. "This is once more your bed-chamber; no more Chevaliers (said he, with horrid grin) can convey letters here—here you are to reside for ever." "Oh! kill me! (I cried) rather than shut me up here—death is far more desirable." "That is the reason I chuse you shall live, to repent every hour of your life the wrongs you have done me: and now hear me—your child you will see no more." At these words, overcome with the unexpected shock, I dropped senseless on the floor; I was soon recalled to life. "Your oath, (I cried;) O, spare my child!" "I do not mean to hurt it's life; I will have it properly taken care of, but the indulgence is too great for you to enjoy. I here swear, that as long as you remain confined in this castle, and observe your oath,

never

never to reveal the Chevalier's murder, nor undeceive the world respecting your fate, so long your boy's life is safe ; I will take care of him, and one day or other, there is a possibility, you may see him again ; but if you ever escape from hence, or divulge these particulars, without my permission, instant death awaits you both, for I shall have a constant spy." To these conditions, dreadful as they were, I was compelled to subscribe. Margarine was ordered into confinement with me, for he found she was my friend. That night the child was conveyed away : dear and precious boy ! alas, heaven only knows whether I shall ever see him more ; unconscious he has a mother, if he lives, we may remain strangers to each other ! We were locked in, and for three days the Count himself brought our scanty fare ; the fourth, he entered with Joseph, who was the under gardener. I was startled to see a stranger,—he appeared equally shocked at seeing me. " Here you both are, remember your oath, madam, for on it more than one life depends. And you,

you, (said he, turning to Joseph) tremble, if you dare break your solemn vow, never to let any person know this woman is alive, never to suffer her to pass from these apartments, without my permission, to hold no conversation with her, but when you bring her food, and in fine, to obey every command of mine and not her's." " I will obey your Lordship," (cried the man, trembling) "'Tis well, then you will preserve her life, and gain my favor. No strangers must be permitted to remain here, should chance or inclination engage any one to visit this castle. Remember this side of it must never be seen, 'tis haunted—do you understand me?" " I do, my Lord, (answered Joseph) and I promise you, these apartments shall never be looked into." " On that depends her existence and your's." They now quitted my room, and left me scarcely able to breathe. The following day the Count and Peter left the Castle. Every other day Joseph came with necessaries, and Margarite was permitted to go down, accompanied by Joseph, to carry up  
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and down water and other conveniencies. In this state I lived two years, if living it could be called, having no other consolation than now and then hearing from my sister; for I had so far gained upon Joseph to permit Margarite's letters, after shewing them to him, to pass under cover to him, and as he found I carefully preserved my secret from others, the poor fellow granted me that indulgence. At the expiration of two years, the Count unexpectedly made his appearance. I shrunk from his sight; he viewed me some time with great emotion; "I am satisfied with your conduct, (said he) and am come to extend my indulgence to you." "O, my child! (I cried out.)" "No, (answered he) that cannot be granted; but you shall have permission to live in the rooms below, and if you swear to enter the garden only at night, the door into it shall be opened." I joyfully agreed to this, and was once more led to the rooms below. Peter was still with him; a bed was brought from another room, and placed in a small parlour, also one for Margarite.

Margarite. The apartments above were again locked up. I tried to soften the Count; he sometimes appeared moved and affected, then again stern and cruel; he staid near a week—the day he left the Castle he came to visit me. “Once more I leave you, but as there is some danger that strangers may come here, I charge you, by every thing that is sacred, by your child’s life and your own, should any person sleep in this Castle, that you go to the gallery or next apartments, rattle a chain I shall leave for that purpose, groan, and make such kind of noises as may appal those who come here, and drive them hence, under an idea of the Castle’s being haunted: I have already sworn Joseph, do you promise the same.” “Ah! Sir, (cried I) why all these oaths, why all these persecutions, which must give you a world of pains, to punish an innocent woman?” “Because, (said he, furiously) because I prefer revenge to my own quiet; because I will be feared, and make your destiny hang on my pleasure.” I could  
say

say no more, I wept bitterly; but nothing could soften his heart; he made me renew my vows, still threatening the life of my child, if I failed—he told me it was well, and carefully attended. I was compelled to acquiesce with his request, or rather command, and he once more left me. He regularly came once in two years, for some time, but latterly it was above four years since I had seen him, till the fatal night he carried me off. 'Tis plain he was well informed of every thing, and knew of Matilda's being at the Castle.

“ I dragged on a wretched existence, in a daily hope, that from his own words, “ There might be a possibility I should see my child again;” and that time might soften his heart, or death deprive him of all power over me. Margarite, who at first hardly brooked her confinement, grew more reconciled, and awed by the dreadful oaths we had taken, we submitted to what we could not prevent, being always in terror of being watched, and that  
nothing

nothing in the Castle passed unnoticed. This was our situation when Matilda came. Joseph came to me late in the evening, the day she arrived at the Castle, acquainting me with the circumstance, and in consequence of our vows we were obliged to conform to our orders,—he to give hints of what might happen, and myself and Margarite try to frighten her from thence—you know the consequence. Had Joseph been at home, probably she would hardly have obtained permission to sleep in the Castle, but Bertha knew nothing of me, and was prevented by her fears from ever venturing through the apartments. The rest you know. I intended to have placed a confidence in Matilda, as far as being brought to the Castle, but beyond that I dared not violate my oath. At your request, my dear brother, I consulted our good Dr. Demoureiz, and he absolved me from my vows, which were compulsory, and made under such horrid circumstances; I have therefore complied with your wishes, and now pray tell me what I can do, or what



I ought to do? I cannot disclose to the world what I have related, without bringing the Count to condign punishment, for the death of the unfortunate and ever-lamented Chevalier, and perhaps may irritate him never to inform me whether my child exists or not—Alas! every way I turn is replete with difficulties and horror.”

Here the Countess stopt, leaving her auditors overcome with astonishment and terror.

“ Good heavens ! (said the Marquis) I never could have supposed it possible a man should carry jealousy and revenge to such frightful guilty lengths, and the whole story appears incredible and almost impossible, that he should proceed so far, trust so many with his secret, and that you should remain such a number of years a victim to his diabolical passions, when there was always, open to you the means for escaping and appealing to your friends.”

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“ Consider, my good brother, (said she) the difficulties, the oaths I had taken never to leave the Castle without his permission, the fate of my child, the certainty that every step I took was known, otherwise I could have offered Matilda an asylum with me, but he assured me I was constantly watched, and therefore any attempts I might make to free myself, would, too probably, accelerate the events I dreaded, and my life (as I doubt not was intended, when he carried me to the wood) would have been the sacrifice. If you look back, you will observe his cunning: when he afterwards came to the Castle and saw Joseph, he did not mention my name, and to be sure expected that he would have told him of my being carried away by some banditti, as he doubtless intended Joseph should believe, but the old man being silent, he supposed he was suspected as the author of the outrage, and therefore determined to put that witness out of the way——”

“ What

“ What a villain ! (cried Mrs. Courtney) and what a wretched life that man must have endured, with such fears of detection, and conscious of such complicated wickedness.”

“ It is ever the fate of villany (said the Marchioness) to plunge deeper into vice, and suffer tenfold the miseries they inflict, from the apprehensions of a discovery, which they know seldom fails at some time or other to overtake them, and Providence has so ordered it, that we generally see the very means they take to hide their crimes from a knowledge of the world, are productive of such events as lead to their detection. I sincerely lament the fate of the poor Chevalier——”

“ Ah ! sister, (cried the Countess) never shall I cease reproaching myself on that account ; had I with firmness refused to receive his second letter, and avoided going to that room alone, perhaps his life, and all my subsequent miseries would have been spared : I failed in the duty I owed my husband and myself,

self, in permitting a clandestine correspondence, although I did not intend to continue it; and one false step, you see, brought on irreparable evils and eternal remorse!"

"I will not pretend, my dear Victoria, (answered the Marchioness) to exculpate you, as entirely free from blame, but if we consider the ill-treatment you received from the Count, previous to the Chevalier's attempts to see you, and the sudden surprise of the moment, when the first letter was conveyed to you, doubtless some allowance ought to be made in your favor; and had you positively refused to receive a second, you would, 'tis possible, have escaped much bitter reflection; but the worst that can be said of you, in my opinion, is, that, in your difficult and unpleasant situation, it was an error in judgment, for I am well assured in you there was no depravity of heart."

The poor Countess was drowned in tears.  
"Be comforted, my dearest sister, (said the Marquis,



Marquis, kissing her hand, whilst the ladies tenderly embraced her) you are, thank heaven, and that good lady, restored to your friends ; I will consult Dr. Demouriez, as to our future proceedings, for I will do nothing rashly, and for your sake, would avoid dragging you husband's crimes into public view."

END OF VOL. I.

